



THE MINNESOTA REVIEW

Mark Spilka, DICKENS AND
KAFKA: THE TECHNIQUE
OF THE GROTESQUE: Ben-
jamin DeMott, I. R.: THE
OPIATE OF THE ELITE
FICTION: Margery Wood,
"The Latin Luncheon Club";
Gil Orlovitz, "The Brass
Plaque"; Fred Moeckel, "The
Drowning." POETRY: E. S.
Forgotson, Robert Henrie, Hy
Sobeloff, Donald W. Baker,
R. R. Cuscaden, Rosemary
Burns, Ralph Robin, Sheila
Alexander, Michael Benedikt,
David Giller, R. C. Vlot, Mar-
tin Halpern, Jennie Mazzaro,
Allen Grossman, Robert Kent.
ART: Maxwell Gordon. RE-
VIEWS: Jean Malaquais,
Ruby Cohn, Donald Emerson,
Daniel Leary, David Schoen-
baum.

I, 4:

Summer, 1961

75c





1961-1962
ONE ACT PLAYWRITING AWARD
THE ARTS COUNCIL
of the
YM-YWHA OF PHILADELPHIA

The Arts Council of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia announces its Fourth Annual One-Act Play Competition, the Winning Play to Receive the Waldow Bellow Memorial Prize of \$100.

There are no restrictions in subject matter or treatment.

Closing Dates Is December 31, 1961.

For Complete Rules, Write to—

WALDOW BELLOW MEMORIAL AWARD
YM-YWHA OF PHILADELPHIA
401 SOUTH BROAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA 47, PA.

In connection with its Humanities Program for 1961, The McKnight Foundation offers prizes of \$1,000 each for outstanding unpublished works submitted by Minnesota residents in the following fields: AMERICAN HISTORY, AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY, AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, ANCIENT HISTORY, EUROPEAN HISTORY, THE NOVEL, THE SHORT STORY OR THE NOVELLA, THE DRAMA, AND THE ESSAY.

Works submitted must reach the Foundation by December 1, 1961. For rules and further details write:

The Secretary
The McKnight Foundation
736 Mendota Street
St. Paul 6, Minnesota

THE MINNESOTA _____ REVIEW



*atque nunc vir sum, abolevi
puerilia*

*editors: Sarah Foster, Neil Myers
editorial assistant: Judith Espelien
business manager: Louise Duus*

THE MINNESOTA REVIEW
is published under a grant from
the McKnight Foundation, and is
not affiliated with the University
of Minnesota or any other public
institution. \$3 per year, \$5 for
two years, 75¢ per copy. All
correspondence should be addressed
to the Editors, Box 4068,
University Station, Minneapolis 14,
Minnesota. Distributed in U.S. by
B. DeBoer, 102 Beverly Rd., Bloom-
field, New Jersey. Printed by the
Hayward-Court Co.,
Minneapolis. Copyright 1961 by
The Minnesota Review.

*cover: taken from the
Yates County, N.Y.
Atlas of 1876.*

FICTION

Fred Moeckel, "The Drowning"	397
Gil Orlovitz, "The Brass Plaque"	429
Margery Wood, "The Latin Luncheon Club"	474

POETRY

Robert Kent, Michael Benedikt, E. S. Forgotson, Ralph Robin, Allen Grossman, R. G. Vliet, Martin Halpern, David Galler	413
Hy Sobiloff, Robert Henrie, Jerome Mazzaro, Sheila Alexander, Rosemary Burns, Donald W. Baker, R. R. Cuscaden	459

ARTICLES

Mark Spilka, "Dickens and Kafka: 'The Technique of the Grotesque'"	441
Benjamin DeMott, "I. R.: The Opiate of the Elite"	489

ART

Maxwell Gordon: reproductions of eight oils	488
---	-----

REVIEWS

Jean Malaquais, "The Gangrene"	499
Daniel Leary, "In Search of a Center"	504
Ruby Cohn, "A French View of Anglo-American Fiction"	510
David Schoenbaum, "About the Origins"	515
Donald Emerson, "The Man Who Would be Dean"	518

CONTRIBUTORS

SHEILA ALEXANDER, author of three novels, has also published poetry widely in the little magazines. She lives in St. Paul. GIL ORLOVITZ, who lives in New York, is best known as a poet. HY SOBILOFF's most recent book of poetry is *In the Deepest Aquarium*. MARGERY WOOD, who appears here for the first time, lives in Wellesley, Mass. E. S. FORGOTSON, who published his poetry in *The Southern Review* and *Perspectives*, lives in Alexandria, Louisiana. MARK SPILKA is preparing a critical study of Kafka and Dickens to be published next winter. He teaches at the University of Michigan. BENJAMIN DEMOTT, author of the novel, *The Body's Cage*, teaches at Amherst College. FRED MOECKEL teaches Humanities at New Haven College. His poetry has been widely published but this is his first short story to appear in print. RALPH ROBIN, who has had poetry in *Perspective*, *The Noble Savage*, *Accent*, and others, also has published stories in many quarterlies and *The Best American Short Stories*. He teaches creative writing at The American University. JEAN MALAQUAIS, well known French novelist, has spent the last year teaching at the University of Minnesota. MICHAEL BENEDIKT, employed in a New York publishing house, has published poetry and translations in *Fresco*, *The Sixties* and *Coastlines*. ROBERT HENRIE, who lives on a walnut farm in western New York, appears here for the first time. ROBERT KENT is a graduate student in English at the University of Minnesota. ROSEMARY BURNS is a soloist with the Civic Ballet Society of Washington, and holds a part time job as secretary to a writer. MARTIN HALPERN, who has had his poetry in many literary quarterlies, teaches at the University of California at Berkeley. R. G. VLIET, who lives in Spring Mills, Pa., has had poems in *The Quarterly Review of Literature*, *The Transatlantic Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*, a story in *Western Review*, and a play contracted to the Southeastern Theatre Conference as their "play of the year." Now he is at work on a novel. ALLEN GROSSMAN teaches at Brandeis University. R. R. CUSCADEN helps edit an insurance newspaper by day, and by night the little magazine, *Midwest*. He lives in Chicago. DONALD W. BAKER, who teaches at Wabash College, has had poetry in *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and many other periodicals. JEROME MAZZARO edits *Fresco* and lives in Detroit. DAVID GALLER, at work on his second collection of poetry, lives in New York. DANIEL LEARY teaches at Fordham University. RUBY COHN, who helps edit *Perspective*, lives in Stanford, California. DONALD EMERSON, Assistant Dean of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, has had articles and reviews in several scholarly and literary journals. DAVID SCHOENBAUM, a Minneapolis newspaperman on a Fulbright at Oxford, has written for the *Review* before.

NOTE: the index to the *Review's* Volume I will be issued this fall as a supplement to II, 1.



Fred Moeckel

The Drowning

BEFORE THE hurricane and flood, looking at the quiet pond was neither frightening nor foreboding for me. A very commonplace brook entered at the north end: the furthest point of the pond shaped in the uncertain shape of half triangle and half oval. The brook was the vertex of a triangle and the dam its base. To think of the pond as a triangle belied the fact that the old dam was made of sand and boulders, but mostly sand. The oval shape: restless, balancing, waiting to topple, precipitous and tottering was never seen in the soft and soothing lap of water against the gentle slope of the barrier of sand and a few rocks that held the water in its place. When the storm came, the triangle became the oval loosed with a pounding, crushing, rushing, unrelenting frenzy against things that were only rock and sand, and that would wash away or roll aside in the wash and roll and thunder of water.

It was against my wishes and judgment that I had taken on the job of lifesaver, quote/unquote. Actually, I was hired to be only a counselor in a children's home, but, because of

the fact that no one else in the small group of counselors could swim as well as I, I had passively become the life saver; like it or not. To be a counselor for twelve of the older boys is one thing; to be in charge of fifty children, boys and girls from four to sixteen, is another. The one is watching, helping perhaps and hindering, and overlooking; the other is over-seeing life itself.

Before the storm came, I reviewed my qualifications for the job I realized could be, and perhaps would some day be, a thing of life or drowning death. But the pond seemed so idyllic and so inviting and so . . . almost harmless. Knowing that someone had to do it enlarged the foolishness of my conceit that I could swim as well as anyone. It found me with a small, and not in the least reassuring, whistle strung on a lanyard, braided of gimp, looped about my neck. I sat, proud and protective, on my high bench built above the stone and sand that held the pond in its place. Then the storm came.

Then it was over. A farmer called, while it was yet raining. And told the superintendent of the Children's Home that we no longer owned a pond. That the dam had broken. That the water had not waited. And that the Home's boat was now only a thing of crushed planks and a single broken oar in the farmer's pasture. And would we come and get it?

I had been lifesaver for two weeks. Now I was only a counselor of twelve of the older boys. I fingered the blue and white lanyard and took it from where it lay with my sunglasses and folded it into a dresser drawer.

I put on my raincoat and overshoes but couldn't find a hat. I went with a few of my boys, dressed on a cold, rainy summer day in similar winter odds and ends to see the skeleton of the pond that the storm had killed.

It would have been better if I had not seen it. Deep in a huge and overwhelming canyon was buried the raft of wood and large oil cans. Only so recently we had rested from our swimming, tanned ourselves, pushed each other and fooled around on this raft. We had behaved like the children they were and like the swimmer I pretended to be. This was before the rain and before this moment of yellow and black

slickers and the cruelty of gaping; grasping for, but not being quite able to touch, either reason or belief. Then, the raft had floated serenely upon a silver, smooth and subtle water; now, the water was a thin brook, timidly as if ashamed, cowering its way past the outraged ruin of raft nosed at so awkward an angle: a third of its planking torn apart in splinters, and the rest buried and embarrassed in the black mud.

The bottom of the pond was so much deeper than I had thought. It was as if its lungs had collapsed and its ribs caved in so one could walk, Jonah-like, through the terrible skeleton and wonder at its terrors. If I had thought; if I had known; if I had known the pond was this deep I would never have dared to say that I could swim at all; to pretend that I could save someone if they were drowning.

If I had known. But I didn't. Until the storm came and tore my pretense from me with the boulders and the sand, and ripped my pride with the splintered raft shattered and smothered. Until the storm came, I thought, watching the boys ooze through the sucking mud, with nothing now the same.

We looked for turtles. We found only a few dead fish, their bellies bone white, sickish as though they were afraid of dying. The fish had drowned in the torrent and the crash of too much water.

It was still raining when we sloshed our way back to the Children's Home to report to the younger children and to the dry, wise, and waiting counselors what we had seen, and all about the huge and terrible hole where our pond had been. Where only last week we had gone to swim and sun and play in the still and harmless water.

The days went by but there was no swimming. The sun that through the weeks dried the mud to earthquake cracks and the black mud to grey, caked dirt, worked its hardships on my boys. They hoed their potatoes and weeded their corn, but though dressed in bathing suits for the heat, they could not go swimming afterwards. Tempers grew oppressively short, and one phrase became frequent, heavy upon all lips: "Why don't they do something about it?" And then they did.

Some men in white shirts came with rolled up papers and

those telescope things surveyors look through. Then, some other men came who had not been to college as the first ones had. They laid out new boards alongside the surveyor's strings. They brought in yellow tractors and moved the earth and set up forms and mixed cement and poured it: grey and tan, slapping batter-like, and hardening to stand like stone.

It was an unimaginable effort for the Children's Home kids to stay away from the telescope things and the strings and the yellow tractors and the forms; but after some of the older boys had pestered the surveyors and some of the younger boys had knocked over the boards and strings plotting the work, the law was laid down with a resolute speech by the superintendent. From that time on nobody, underline nobody, was to be allowed . . . etcetera, etcetera.

But one day the resolution was reversed and the kids were going to be allowed to see how the whole thing was coming along. After all, it did affect them so very much. In outlining the visit, which would fortunately take place on a Sunday when the workers would not be there, the superintendent made another speech. And again there was to be one requirement. Nobody, underline nobody, was to climb on the dam wall. It was not until some of the older boys began to snicker that the superintendent realized what he had said and fell to coughing and looking miserable, for he was a Christian man. The younger kids didn't know what was so funny and the older girls and the counselors pretended they hadn't heard.

By the time October came and even the furthest hope of swimming had disappeared in the blue weather, the dam was complete. It was christened by the brook water, brown and eager, touching at its feet and being sucked in and blotted up by the dry pond bottom. By the time November came, we had a pond again, to freeze, to whiten, to harden; and on which to skate.

The middle of the following May, other work began. A new raft was made: the old barrels were painted a summer green and topped by green and white planks. A new diving board and dock arrangement with a pair of ladders jutted from the spillway of the new dam. Load after load of fresh

sand made it difficult to wait for the middle of June and "School's out."

Summer had begun. I stood on the sand covered dam with two of the boys who had helped me anchor the raft and string the floats. We watched the quickly lighting, quickly darkening surface as small clouds smothered the sun. Sporadic puffs of wind played at spontaneous ripples and danced them aimlessly about. The movement of patterned shapes blown across the surface of the pond pointed at the three of us and especially, I thought, at me. Arrow-like and hypnotic as they were, they were only sun and the play of light and air.

We stood as David overlooking the harp of Gennesaret with ripples where David had waves; to seem the strings of an ominous large and other harp like the small thing on which he played.

Once or twice I thought I saw the bottom of the pond, but it was probably only the reflection of clouds. By the time the erasing ripples cleared again, the surface seemed placid and flat and of no depth at all.

Evidently I had not impressed anyone by my telling of how deep the pond was and how terrible it seemed to me that first day after the storm. Actually, I don't know if I ever tried to put it into words. It was a foolish thing. Everyone knows water isn't a flat, two-dimensional thing. And drowning is, after all, nothing that happens very often. And a person can drown in a thimble of water as well as in a Grand Canyon full to the brim. And it's just more or less the chance a person has to take. And somebody has to be lifeguard.

But I think it was the hurt and hopeful faces of my own boys that made me say something I dreaded saying. I suppose the thought that I would ever be called upon to try to save any of them from drowning, and the thought that I might fail, and the thought that I might in any way be responsible or irresponsible for a child's death; all these were only thoughts, and I was faced with facts that pleaded and faces that might make fun of my caution and think it cowardice. The word I hated to say was: yes. But I said it. Once again the white and blue lanyard and the small toy whistle

dangled from my neck, doing its best to drown my fear, but not succeeding.

A ritual of bells prepared the boys and girls for the first swim of the season. Two o'clock. Two bells sounded, and the locker rooms were aflame with the flurry of excitement, exchange of boasts and remembrances of last year's swimming, in the change of Home clothes to bathing suits. Then, outside to the lawn to wait and wonder. To seem busy at doing nothing.

A few boys had pitifully torn old and worn bathtowels to be frayed further by their use as weapons snapping with a rifle crack against the legs of others until the towels were rescued by a counselor leaning from an upstairs window of the brick building. 2:10. Now the boys rolled two huge black rubber tractor tires, pock-marked, patched with red squares down the tar walks, and over bodies bent purposely to be run over. Next the chase of boys after girls; and always those girls who preferred their newly acquired dignity, and just sat. There is no creature more ladylike than a fifteen-year old girl watching children who don't know any better but who spend their time playing games.

The smaller children grouped themselves in a soldierly line; then, tired of their formation, they dissolved it. They became interested instead in the execution of strikingly dissimilar acrobatic feats. Each one outdid his predecessor and utterly amazed each other child who watched; amazed for one moment. Then each, as the others had before him, would try a trick of his own to utterly astound the watchers. Their older brothers and sisters acted as though swimming were just another activity that made no essential difference in their lives; but now and then one of them would betray the hint that waiting was terribly hard and seemingly endless. "It's been almost a year since last year," one said, and he apparently made sense to the others.

One of the boys who had received a new bathing suit from his Aunt carefully wrapped one of the towel remnants about it. It was maroon colored and that was all right; but it was the kind that had nothing but white lacing down the sides

and that wasn't very much. It would be all right under water. A tractor tire skinned one of its patches off on the gravel-sharp sidewalk, and lost its air so abruptly it shivered and crumpled like a Fourth-of-July snake, grey and unsnake-like. One tire remained and it was laid safely on the grass.

The green lawns and the towering pine sentinels and the scraggy hedges looked on as I left the waiting children and walked with two boys toward the pond. One boy helped by carrying the oars to our new rowboat, and the other, the first aid kit. I could easily have taken these things, but the boys were so anxious. Down the hill the three of us went, watched with interest by the patient host who waited behind for one bell. We rounded the corner past the corn and carefully negotiated the deeply rutted approach to the beach. The dirt road was still scarred from the hurricane and, as my two helpers were barefooted, the uncovered gravel was sharp enough to warrant walking lightly and slowly. Even before we got to the sand we could hear the bell far backward up the hill. And we knew what it meant.

The three of us trotted as fast as we could with the oars banging in half-a-league leaps in a kind of counter-rhythm to the bounding of the boy who dragged them. We made it to the pond and I was busily standing alongside the bench where sat my two helpers and the medicine kit, long before the other children came into view: older boys first, younger boys second, younger girls third and the older girls taking their self-conscious time behind. The boys reached the gravel and sharp rocks and deep cuts in the dirt road and the younger girls almost caught up to them.

I looked at the water: so quiet before such an impending torrent of noise and laughter. I thought I caught sight of the bottom of the pond deep down in its inner dimension. I thought, with all the imagery of a line of Dante, that if the pit hidden by the quiet surface could be inverted, could be made earth and rock instead of absence, how great a hill and how ominous a shape the pond would be. For all to see.

The older boys came in leaps and boundless energy, charg-

ing right to the ankle-edge of the water. Some kept coming to where my platform guarded the diving area.

Immediately below where I stood and looked at things far away, the new dock and the burlap-tipped and never-used diving board looked out and pointed at the brightly trimmed raft. To the right, and fenced in by a floating fence of rope and evenly spaced white corklike wooden floats, was the marked off, sand-shallow wading area the younger swimmers were not allowed to pass.

All of the kids by now had reached the final slope of the shore. So used to bells and signals, they waited again. I blew the whistle. Everybody in. I laughed to myself. I laughed because I found myself being the hinge figure in the lives of so many children. My slightest movement, even the blowing of a whistle, bent them to my omnipotence. I laughed, but I didn't like it. No one was that important. Put your hand in the pond and then draw it out and see how much you're missed: it was an old saying. I laughed at it but I hated it or myself for what it meant.

I thought, and was glad for the thought, of something else. I remembered what the superintendent of the Home had said, in trying to persuade me to take upon myself the very responsibility I now shouldered. He handed me the lanyard and said, not knowing what he said: "Don't worry, people don't drown very often." I thought to myself, "No, only once." I should have said it. No, I shouldn't have. Then it was too late. I was always thinking of things too late to say them. Too late. Too late.

The boys who dove into the water were, of course, the first ones in. They wasted no time in changes of mind at the temperature of the pond, but with a plunge ended all backward glances. I failed to see the first boy dive. I was too busy watching the younger children delicately, but somehow with a small scale bravery, venture to their ankles, some to their knees, slowly and then, startled as a recollection, turn about and run to the warm sand. I did not see the first of the boys to dive, or the second or the third, until each of the five had made his way to the ladders. I did recognize the first of them

to climb and straighten himself, shake his head to throw the water from his hair, and walk flatly to the mark from which he would begin his next dive and with heroic gestures ready himself for another and another and another. I did recognize him.

Three years before . . . before the flood and before I began working at the Children's Home . . . this boy and, strangely enough, the second and third divers, whose graceful actions I watched, had been young actors in the irreversible afterward of a cruel happening. Each of the boys was twelve or thirteen then. Yet, when it happened, they had taken part in the search. Three years ago the pond had been used not only by the kids from the Children's Home, but by those from a camp in the vicinity. The camp had not one lifeguard, but two; not pretenses as I was, but genuine articles with badges and papers and an efficient swagger and poise. And this was all very good for the boys who went swimming. But one of them did not.

He was a sickly looking boy and even more seriously sick than he looked. He was forbidden to go swimming by his doctor; in fact he wasn't allowed to do most of the things that boys are not boys without doing. Camp for him was a mocking kind of thing. One day, while the other boys went swimming he stayed behind at the camp and the nurse tried to keep him from thinking by a game of checkers. After one game, after two, both of which he won easily, he said he was going to lie down on his bunk and he would see her later. When the boys came up the hill fresh from their swim, nobody thought anything about not seeing him. He was always someplace or other watching. But this was not like other times.

It would have been better if they had let him swim when the other boys and the lifeguards were there. They could have helped him if he had one of his attacks. But everyone was back at camp.

An hour later when it was time for the Children's Home kids to have their swimming period, and when they had just reached the pond, a very worried camp director came down

and talked to the Home counselor in charge. One of the boys from camp was missing and had anyone seen him? He was wearing a white tee-shirt and khaki pants, and the tee-shirt had a green triangle with the letter "O" inside of it. He was about five feet tall and a hundred pounds.

Twenty minutes later, the three boys, twelve and thirteen years old, pulled the body from the pond. To walk in a line of swimmers hand in hand and to trip over a submerged thing and find it not to be a thing but a boy; to pull the body to the shore and find it not to be heavy, but almost floating; to drag the body across the shore, trying to lift it but finding it heavy after all: these are difficult for anyone to do and to bear. By the time the firemen came, and even perhaps long before the firemen came, it was too late.

I watched the three of them: diving, effortlessly swimming, climbing, running, diving in the quick succession of in and out, one at a time. Always led by the boy who stumbled that day in the water. I wondered if they remembered the searching of their legs in the line that dragged the bottom of the dark water just past the safety of the rope with the nonchalantly bobbing floats. Now they were fifteen; the one boy was sixteen, and if anyone should call for help, these three would help me. I could count on that.

To read of accidents and to experience them are two things poles apart; pointing out the difference between art and life. Art is ordered, it has forewarnings, hints of what will happen. In a book, long before a man drowns, we read of events and sayings which make his drowning inevitable and almost necessary. In life there is no warning. The minutes and the events tick by, and are the same as always; the characters say characteristic things, unimportant things which have no meaning at all before the final event, and little meaning afterward. Afterward, men try to piece the preliminary happenings together: it soothes their consciences and proves their theology, and makes a kind of order out of chaos. But there is no order, no pattern there. And never any warning.

It was three years ago the boy from camp drowned. It was last summer, two days before the storm, that I first came to

the realization that life is not art. This was when I still thought of the pond as a peaceful place; I did not as yet know of its terrible depth.

I had been watching as well as I could through the bother of boys who kept pestering me to look to see them dive: baby-spanker, swan dive, jackknife.

"Man alive, did you see that?"

"Watch while I dive."

"You're not looking."

Half-gainer, belly-flop. I thought I had been watching well not only the divers but the shallow area, when a young boy, one of the waders, came dawdling up to me and said a few childish things about tadpoles he had collected. And did I ever see one so big? And . . . then . . . did I know where Willie was?

Willie and he had been playing together in the sand, but now Willie was missing. I blew my whistle twice, yelled to the older boys, and ran. Everyone left the water, churning the brown to white as they ran. The sand flew in sprays and I plummeted through the shallow water to get to the place where Willie was last seen. I yelled for him, foolishly, knowing a child does not hear under water. I called and strained my eyes and wildly thrashed in my searching. Frantically, the younger children stood on the shore, and the older boys had reached me in my fear when Willie, lying flat in the rowboat, lifted his head above the side and laughed in a fragile way.

I was so overjoyed at seeing him that I almost cried. He got a bawling out and something more. It was completely unreasonable, of course, but fear does not stop to reason. I hoped Willie did not think that we were angry he was safe and that that was why he got the punishment he did. Or that we were somehow disappointed.

I talked to him before he went to bed that night a year ago. I told him that I liked him, but that it really wasn't any way for a boy as big as he was to act. It was almost like crying wolf. I said I only spanked him because I thought a lot of him. I don't think he believed what I said, but *I* did.

Willie's older brother was the boy who had stumbled on the drowned camper. He was the first to reach my side in the thrashing water when it was Willie that I feared was drowning somewhere deep and beyond my knowing.

Now I watched Willie's brother, and the others, altogether the five, that dived and stitched with the needles of themselves, the fabric of soft and wrinkled water. I had to blow the whistle two or three times at the boys and girls on the raft. To push and horseplay there was allowed only to a certain point: a point never realized until it was reached and outrun and the whistle blown and the threat made. Then the kids would quiet down for a short interim only to resume their excesses.

Two of the boys, who thought themselves especially good at swimming underwater, swam between and nearly between the raft and the opposite shore, over and over again until their lips were as purple as their eyes and almost the color of the bathing suit held together with white lacing worn by one of them. Some of the older girls took over the raft and spread themselves upon it to show their disdain for the pranks of the boys and to tan themselves in the sun now far west of overhead. When they tired of this, they dove correctly, accurately into the water, and when they surfaced, they swam together, always the three of them together, to the shore; leaving behind them three perfect dark green silhouettes on the lighter green planks of the raft. The water underneath the diving board was twenty feet deep and the pond bottom sloped to about thirty feet beneath the raft. This I remembered each moment.

Three boys had received my permission to take the row-boat out and I had to blow the whistle at them. They had come within the swimming area, and as this was against a rule they had forgotten or intended to forget, I motioned them back and they obeyed with an ". . . aw gee, you can't have any fun around here." Off they went to the brook end of the pond, impatient with me, but soon to forget their impatience and to forgive my legalism. They lost themselves in hunting for snappers as big as garbage-pail covers and frogs

the size of chickens. I watched them go for a while with even strokes and a skill far beyond the reach of adult rowers.

It was Willie who handled the oars, pushing the whole pond backward at me. He was used to rowboats. It was Willie who had gotten the splintered oar from the farmer's field and who kept it as a kind of relic in his room where he could touch it as he lay in bed, waiting for sleep.

Halfway across the pond, where the water was about fifteen feet deep, a large and oval triangular cloud intervened between the circle of sun and the compromise of water. It made the surface as dark and searchless as the depths. Willie varied the stroke of his oars to a walking motion and the small boat shuddered violently at this change of pace and then joined, as the cloud passed, in a jaunty, swaying stride to the further end of the pond.

Here, high-bush-blueberry brush tangled together like brambles and told the boys how far up the brook they could navigate. Here, marsh hummocks, posed as stepping stones and their frog sunbathers leaped with a circle and two periscope eyes, like afterthoughts at the coming of the enemy. Boys are the natural enemies of frogs.

From where I sat on my white bench, the boat was as small as its thought was large in my mind. I followed its every tip and maneuver as closely as the frogs must have who watched, I am sure, with human fear, and were thankful to whatever power frogs are thankful when the boat awkwardly, unnaturally backed away, turned and, twenty feet away, passed beyond their frog horizon.

Now it was Willie who rode as passenger and the other two boys, side by side, who tried to share in a task whose size was fit to the scale of one. The boys rowed and Willie directed them, but I, unknown to them, guided them with my eyes through the cavern over which they approached. They were a water bug skimming over a depth of whose danger they were not aware. Their reflection, painted against so monstrous a background, was a delicate contradiction to the dark shapes that supported it.

To my relief the rowers reached the shore. With no poetry

and much rhetoric, the boat was beached and tied by Willie, who knew all there was to know about ropes and rowboats. Then the three boys melted into the sea of swimming faces in the splash of water and the windmill rush of legs and arms.

My attention had wandered, not absently, but with a concentrated focus on each detail of the picture before me. No, it was no picture; if anything was unreal and set apart and not living in my relationship to the pond and its child swimmers, it was I: set as though I were a picture looking out from a high white rack. Everyone moved with vigor sharply cut away from and unhindered by the dark water in which they swam but of which they took no second thought. They had traded the taken-for-granted envelopment of air for that of water. That was all. Water was a toy, a trinket, a plaything, a distillation of sought pleasure and spontaneous joy. It was a way of collecting things that were bubbles of sunshine and air; to hold them in a fragile but touchable glass.

Everyone was in the water: no one lay on the raft and the shore was bare. For a full moment, even the boys who had worn a monotonous repetition of dock and diving board, splash and ladder upon the afternoon, had surrendered their activity to the passive beckoning of water shallow before changing to sand. Everyone was in the pond; whether swimming, lying with ripples lightly covering and uncovering with warm sheets of thin water, or wading or scooping grasps of sand and mud and water to seine through child fingers minnows and pebbles and small treasures.

Everyone but I. Colorless and shivering, I looked out of my picture and was surprised to see some of the swimmers standing, shivering with their arms crossed to their shoulders, shifting from one foot to the other in ankle-deep water. They looked back at me. A shiver of water skimmed like lifted cellophane in a glisten the whole length of the pond, fell upon the swimmers followed by a darkness and then engulfed the shore and overcame me.

I knew something was wrong. Omens were superstitions and signs were arbitrary and life was not art and there were

no warnings and . . . yet . . . what? I could not cross my arms to warm my body of its fear and the warm air could not exorcise the arrows that pointed toward me in their onset across the dark water. Something was wrong.

I got down from my platform and with the thunder in my stomach prodding at my heart and with my eyes on the vague and shapeless deepest region of the pond, I walked, not watching my step, but trying to see some movement where there was no swimmer to be seen. I stumbled through a shifted sand mound that had been carved as a castle perhaps, by the younger children. I could see the bottom of the pond. The kids in the shallow water began to move, slowly at first as I was moving slowly.

Some of them had seen me. Through no communication but an unknown gesture or a far-off look, or a shiver of air and water seen and felt, they knew something was wrong. Saying nothing, their silence drew them, and those who had not seen but followed those who did, from the water. As I reached them, Willie's brother and the two older boys of the event I knew only too well, were at my side. The other kids stood in spectator awe and speechlessness, in groups of small asking numbers of but one question.

I looked back at the deep and ever deepening pond. The young swimmers watched me closely and followed the direction of my eyes to the pond and back again. None of us saw anything: our eyes filled with the blur of water nothing more than water. Our ears strained for a sound that did not come. The silence was an underwater forever.

It was Willie's brother who started time again and set my heart to separating one moment from another. "It's o.k." he said and everyone seemed to know what he meant. Even I could understand, for Willie's face filled my eyes. He stood in front of his brother, who, ruffling Willie's hair worse than it was, tried to make the boy forget the shiver of his body and the trembling of his lips. Then Willie spoke. "Let's go home," he said.

I didn't have to answer anything. My fingers had found the small whistle strung on the lanyard looped about my

neck. I lifted it over my head and placed its shape: half triangle, half oval, upon Willie's shoulders.

We walked in a quiet procession up the dirt road, through the cornfield to the Children's Home that overlooked everything and saw everything like a picture. But I didn't look back.

Perhaps the sun would be flooding the triangle of pond with its once warm, but now chilling, circles of light. Perhaps the pond would puncture the sun reflected on its surface with quick and shivering arrows shot from its depths and break it to a shattered oval, drowning it.

Robert Kent

Statement for Jeannette Pearlstein

The first words out of her mouth were,
"I'm engaged."
I watched the knot for which her hair
was managed

And top button on her coat from Best's,
holding out
Against the pressure of her breasts.
"You, no doubt,

Are still writing." —Yes. "I'm happy."
(—for you, she
Left for me to write.) "Meet Kappy;
him, only

Short for Kaplan." Kaplan was hands
full of gloves,
And I watched how these man's man's
kind of moves

Worked for her: how she cut the shake
with cleaving,
Fast to his arm; and then did make
off. Leaving

For me to state: she made the most
of what must
Be proof to Jeannette Pearlstein's lost
sense of lust.

I. M.

The widow works
over a basket of letters

while I sit eating toast
in the breakfast nook.

My shirt is yellow,
the color of a new lemon,

and I drop butter on it,
blobs of jam.

She fumbles over
the envelopes, fixing

them *in memoriam*:
mumbling under

the boom of the washer;
in-laws talking in

the living room; a daughter
picking through

the refrigerator.

I kick for my napkin.
Everything I say

is part of the accident.
I want to leave.

Christmas Card

Mother, the Christmas gifts I'd get you,
One by one have disappeared or broken.

Two matched Nippon cups: pre-war,
Twined with enamel dragons: the saucers left.

A reindeer, of delicate pulled glass:
I'd argued with the spinster in the Come
& See Shoppe for over an hour:
Unwrapped, it fell from another's eager hand.

The yellow pitcher, frosted half-way
Up with a swirling, free-applied handle:
It was almost as if I'd intentionally
Dared your cleaning women to break it:

Split, from heated coffee, at one
Of your teetotaling card parties.
(How I hate now a free-for-all in glass!)

Intimate gifts went with my teens.
I noticed, washing my hands, you've still

Got the bottles of stale cologne,
Discoloring in the medicine cabinet.

But my taste improved: a cranberry-glass
Kerosene lamp, to-be-electrified:
It lurks now among your knick-knacks,
Chimneyless, in the butler's pantry.

The last extravaganza: a crystal
Chandelier I'd bought you in pieces

And patiently re-strung and cleaned:
Hung a year in your once-a-year dining room.

Now, a copper fixture, pretending
Colonial permanence, hovers its height
Adjustable self over your fragile feast.

Michael Benedikt

Battle

I spotted you on the ridge
Carrying a large armchair, for war.
No doubt the elements
Beat about your raincoat
As you stumbled there
Silhouetted with the loveseat.

Enemy, you are so silly.

Relations Within a Fief

Now I am looking in the vicinity
Of my castle, I see no charming wheels
Making the signals of companionship.
I used to have acrobatic contests,
Events, yes, at which your relatives
Would attend, carrying children, paper
Bags, bicycling. Shortly I'm going to catch you
Upon this bending wand I'm holding.
There you see butterflies sitting, several varieties
In fact, and an ant. Welcome!
Now I will catch you on the stick.

Survivor

Here are some rocks that are falling
On you. It is the history of the world
You are reading, hand on the dog.
They are falling around your shelves,
About the fireplace. They will hit China,
Linen, the portrait of the perished
Aunt perched on the mantelpiece.
Afterwards, cleaning them away
You will sweep the dog under the carpet
With that expression of deep shock.

E. S. Forgotson

Once a Year, Every Year

The Pope is visited annually by the Devil.—Line from a dream I had on the night of Oct. 15, 1960

Il Papa, il Diabolo—classic pair.
I'm hoping to imagine it: there
In the beautiful room (simple but elegant)
They sit trying to make each word relevant
(After all, they speak only once in every year).
How do they sound? Does the Devil suffer fear?
But long ago I met a Sergeant who said,
"Evil prevails." He never opened his head
Again to me. When he said it, what was
He thinking—what exactly his First Cause?
Back to that chastely elegant room and its
Propugnators who give each other fits:
Perhaps they view this scene as a state occasion,
Not so much in the nature of usual invasion,
And at some tapered point in the conversation
They will turn to present demands of accommodation.
Will the Chief of Good perhaps evoke Benedict
And the way he found of easing up on the conflict?
A likely bit, for Benedict banned the ridiculous
After that little hair-shirt stretch cavernicolous;
And wound up quite a lot less than Pachomian
From pressure of need to enrapture the average Roman.
Shall the Host of God prevail? Wine with his dinner
Made Benedict's chances of total victory slimmer—
But gave him at least a base to remain in business
If he could continually stop short of dizziness.

To drain of the "lower joys" the ticklish brewing
Summoned sin; but a cup could keep the Ideal going.
So I see the two of them, on that annual day,
Facing each other for two thousand years of gray
(Not black *or* white); and surely both are tired,
And surely neither has what he desired
At the outset, and surely both await
The critical knife which cleaves the knot of love and hate.

The Two King Cobras: To Jawaharlal Nehru

We're both resolved to crush. That you can bank on.
And each of us at his back enjoys a grim
Historic host whose squamous columns clank on.
So each of us must say, Sure death to trust *him*.

Each of us charges the other with bearing poison,
Each of us says *his* sacs are loaded with milk;
Each of us sees the other's heart as frozen,
Neither could brother the other and his ilk.

And we joust this day on a field as round as a ball.
We will not grow faint except at each other's feintings.
Our lances are bigger but the room for honor grows small.
Happy only in hoping each other's ultimate pantings,

We will hide our fondest intentions until we achieve them,
Wait till all weak testers are toasted to a turn,
Till pretenses are so familiar that all believe them—
Till one of us coils about the earth like a net about an urn.

Ralph Robin

Cultural Details

There is a horror in cultural details:
Shirts, their style and size;
Set sayings on given occasions
(Which side the fork goes on is fixed in hate);
The opening in proverbs of stupid mouths
Over the musty sweaters of the old;
The quack-quack of the young judging the young
In how far one should go. Everywhere are
The uninformed adherences. The King
Of the Desert of Outright Fakery
In his war does not destroy them;
In his peace he sets up his satraps
To maintain them as well as he understands
And as profitably as he can use them.

Sunday Morning

I brought you only
The *New York Times*,
The only wonder
That was portable—
Scarcely so—
The talkative dryad
Of a softwood tree,
To be a respectable companion
For you,
While I went out again
To philander with the nymph
Of recent rain.

Scruple

Dangerous as an off-duty policeman,
My scruple seizes on my breath's throat, to choke
With clutch and twist;

In the services of whim
To use gun, billy, blackjack, and handcuffs,
To call the sober thought drunk
And call the precinct.

I breathe seeking the improvement of him,
Either by intelligence or by death.

Allen Grossman

Endymion

To fight the crocodile you must be young.
Grown old you accept your mutilation, and wander
Into the swamps to fight the greater monster.
Whatever your skill or luck you always die,
But no one will have seen you slip headless
Beneath the mantle that floats and flowers on the
water.

At seventeen the nerves of your seamed body
Are strung like the strings of a lute or a strong bow.
When the crowd has gathered
And while the pitchman describes your past escapes
As victories,
You stare into the pit until the water clears.
You arouse one beast after another with a stick
Until you find one big enough to kill you,
And drag it out by the tail, already weary
In your arms and thighs of this vast scorpion
Which neither wakes nor sleeps. It would escape
Back to the time-mirroring water of the pool
But you distract it, and display it to the crowd,
Knowing that the beast has summoned you, and
commanded you,
And is your destiny.
Then like a lover you cover it with your body.
You link your arm beneath the staggering clawed
Fin, and lift it over on its back.
It is as white as moonlight.

Now leap back.

Now it is most dangerous although it swoons.
How like Endymion you are in love with death.
The crowd awaits your reapproach,
Half-naked, to the panting creature
Which they each create, and in the instant
Cower from, crying to you, "Have mercy, deliver us,
or we die."

Now you go forth to tempt the beast which never
Can be tempted, and not for the love of mercy
But for the unacknowledged love of death
Drag open the great rake of the jaws,
And breathe your breath into the ivory maw.
Your muscles quiver, and your skin is white with
terror.

But it is stayed, and we are still upon the shore.
The crocodile crawls back into the pool.
You pass the hat along the concrete wall
Which guards the pit, indifferent and dreamless.

Martin Halpern

Sunshower

People running for cover before a burst
Of summer rain are right as the rain itself.
Smack in the middle of afternoon, the inspired
Interruption and the full, authentic response,
As though New York has lapsed into a sort of
Reality for a moment or so. . . .

And so
I and these others stand now, in hallways, under
Awnings, somewhat wet, somewhat breathless,
Each, from the run, the surprise, the abrupt jolt
Out of our separate inertias, watching
Together the rain, saying and thinking apart
And together and delighted privately
At the saying, the thinking how strange it is the sun
Should be out shining yet it pours like this,
And how it is a sunshower only and soon
Will pass, and how all-of-a-sudden all this was
And so on. . . .

And all, this moment or so, downright
As right as the rain's own loud, startling fragrance.

Elegy During a Convalescence

One of those days when things go piff, go poof,
Against a universe turned music-proof
About me, rain was beating time to time,
When mention of an old man's dying came
In the late mail—an old and ill man due
To die, whose death spelled deprivation to
None living but an old, ill, childless wife
Who'd "follow soon," the note predicted. Grief
Was not required, nor was it what you'd call
Grief, or its guilty lack, that blocked up all
Free circulation of my consciousness
With questions neither moot nor meaningless
Rehearsed and re-rehearsed without will, like
Some jaded juke-box tune the mind can't shake:
"How, where, and what," nagged of a dead man's spirit
And that sick mass of me that did not merit
Thought of its own survival; so that through
The waning of the rain's toneless tattoo
In the long sodden hours till sleep-time, "how,
Where, what" translated "dead, not here, there, now
Or ever anything," until each word
Lost sense, the syllables and rain beat blurred
To one flat nonsense sound, and I awoke
Healed to true mourning as the clear dawn broke.

R. G. Vliet

A Photograph

for Ramona McBryde and Lorita Gibbens McBryde

I

Backed by pasteboard and a warp of years
you seem a small girl proper to seminaries
you seem so staitly proportioned and your wrist
sustains so delicately the false fenceprop.

Our Dear Friend says: Hardly. You were big
bigboned to follow behind an ox
manly upon a horse, sheepfetcher, could heft
a rifle through the brush, girl the hounds
led, winter needlegrass and buffaloburrs
festering your skirt. One time you wore
a choker of red laurelbeans and acorns.

But now your skirt is stiff and formal
as leather, heavy with hips, this day
prodded from seminary: you are poised
as a lady: upheld in the stiff back, breasts
under white blouse spattered with Saturday
lace, a cameo like a seal at your neck.

II

What is real, this or that other
day outside this picture when you woke
the sister here beside me now

Goodmorning, went out to a sound
of hounds, to such circles of morning
light,

and found your self there
caught halfway through the wire
the rifle hugged with sudden fact
to let a blunt tongued bullet
through your breast, your mouth pressing
kisses of dirt;

when your mother
rocked you in halfcircles of her distress
under a liveoak and never spoke
and pinched ripe burrs from your dress?

III

Doves in season fall.
Helped by ringtails black
persimmons fall, the call
of hounds drops ringtails:
October when red laurel
beans acorns of liveoak
fall, and the world is real.

David Galler

Whereas Up North

Young Negroes born and raised Down South
Are lucky sons of bitches. They
Are quoted without opening mouth;
Are recognized from day to day

For things they didn't even do;
Are even expected, one might say,
To rape white women. Only the Jew
Had it so good in Hitler's day.

Foolish to come Up North, when schools
Close down for them, National Guard
Troops out, and Klansmen bide by rules
Of decency by jamming hard

Their hoods over their crazy faces.
Their old mammies can always find
Seats in backs of buses. Places
Out of the South don't come to mind

Where, after years of service, one
Becomes the family's guardian angel
And friendly boogie to the Colonel's
Demented grandson whose eyes run.

The Brass Plaque

AT THE foot of Wall Street, on the corner of a building occupied by a steamship line and other worthy enterprises, there is a brass plaque. It commemorates the fact that George Washington was welcomed on this spot, when it was once a wharf; greeted, it notes, by his grateful countrymen.

I saw in the sun that the brass words must be well kept; they shone; my eye followed them as with a polishing cloth, rubbing a little more, as we sometimes do, when no more rubbing need be done, out of the corner of an eye of love. I idly wondered that no one else looked.

It was the idling half of the lunch hour, and the leisurely pipes tapped on the fire hydrants, and against the raised soles of shoes. Here and there, in twos and threes, men spoke. It was a bright thorough day, and they cupped their chins to light their cigarettes, the wind needling their hair; but the raw rankle had passed from the winter, and they dispensed with topcoats. One of them abruptly shrugged off from a group, and crossed the street under the new express highway in construction, now being painted a rousing orange, which later would be hidden. I myself risked the raucous warning of the scaffolded painters, to respond to the chapped brightness of the river at the dock beyond. The man didn't recognize me; I was new to the office and remembered his name only because of its possible music: Thomas

Lombino; so I glanced away from his dark profile of nuances, where the skin made barely game over the bone, yet thinly tough. And I smarted at the river.

It may have been that the salt of the sea ran more vividly in my momentary temperament than in the duskgreen currents of the Hudson; nonetheless, my nostrils were stinging, and my throat widened at the cool compresses of the air; it is at such times that the vision narrows to take a running broadjump across the Atlantic. It is then that one sees so many things white, white unbelievably, like the freighter moored close by. *Contessa* she was called, the sharp black letters squared proudly away on her bow; one can smile at such, and the heart ride sweetly at anchor as the ship. I could see no one on deck, though no one seemed to have deserted her. Above, a few gulls patrolled. Below, an old barge rotted; it floated on the closeup rot in the water, past the projecting foot of Thomas Lombino resting, in the way it might have at a bar, on the raised beam along the dock where, further down, oblivious to all else, a young man and young woman sat, intensely admiring each other. The quiet vision of the river tempered the traffic noises from the street behind. One could think without thinking; I could tie up without trouble to that man on a launch, for the simplest of reasons, that his breathing rose and fell with the river while, bending over patiently, he emptied a can of gasoline into the tank; a big man, bundled up, bending. Doubtless George Washington had had a few fine colonial phrases at his command when he had been greeted by his countrymen, and I guessed that some men on the docks then had listened to him gratefully, and had registered him somewhat differently than Stuart had on canvas, puffy jawed, banal. We have a need to see men plaqueless. Grateful; no longer dubs of the Crown; and an American could have roared with love and laughter to see Washington's wig fly off in an impudent wind. I could not remember if he had been bald or thick-haired, but I could picture the man plaqueless. I felt someone nudge my arm, and I turned, quite surprised by a small, sandyhaired man whom I hadn't encountered for at least a

year. Arnold said that he himself hadn't at all expected to run into me here. He went on to explain that he still worked for the same out-of-town firm, but was in New York a space to assemble a book for the company, and that he was researching it at the office building nearby. I asked what sort of book.

"Oh, it's on atomic energy," Arnold said. He gazed at the Hudson a moment, clipped of nose and mouth.

I was faintly disturbed, not by his information, but that I had observed the dark profile of Thomas Lombino gone. At least ten minutes remained to the lunch hour, and Lombino had seemed to enjoy, if somewhat seriously, his stance at the river: I thought I had compassed a sweet kind of gravity on his face, and a sensitivity the less dubious for being less deliberate. I really didn't know why I should have at all been concerned, so I ascribed it to the possibility that the casual is often catching.

Still, the fat tugboats butted up the river. No great ocean liners bulked, but the sense of them was present: spaces of the faint haze on the waters belonged to the liners, and waited for them. The wind insistently shook the sky blueness, as if it silently rang for the ocean liners to come and take possession; and my lungs, absorbing the salt trail, finally knelt my heart low over the wide tranquil thrill, and I was in no wise ill at ease.

"It'd sure be great to be out there, wouldn't it?" Arnold exulted, its width at variance the more it splayed his thin lips. "I can't stand this working over a lousy desk. It's a good job, but I like to be on the move, like I was before. Ah, but even all that flying around I did on that inspection stuff, sure, it was interesting, but what the hell that got to be lousy too. Lousy government inspection. Who wants to be connected with all that crap electronic stuff? What kind of life, huh? Boy, you were sure deep in meditation." His voice quilled through a formidable nasal congestion.

"Thinking of George Washington," I remarked amiably.

"Old George, eh?" Arnold grinned, derisive and reverent, his frail shoulders munching on his expensive pinstripe. His

teeth were real enough, but they would strike people as being false, I suppose because his jutting gums projected them, comically. It would also strike people that Arnold would easily shiver, though he never did at all, and yet it was always felt that he should. Even during the coldest part of a winter I'd never seen him shiver, while he apparently forever looked about to—in the hottest weather, too. I remembered him suddenly in Sylvia's basement apartment—Sylvia Jessup, from North Carolina, working for a Manhattan engineering firm. I'd come over for breakfast one morning to find Arnold on the bed, Sylvia immediately apologising that he'd slept there by himself all night. Arnold had substantiated it, miserably. He'd got terribly drunk, and Sylvia had let him sleep it off. Anyhow, I recalled him in his undershirt and shorts, skinny as the most casual caricature, sitting on the edge of the bed, moaning and holding his head. I'd fully expected that he would shake, badly: it had been a terribly raw morning, and utterly wretched in the place, and he practically naked; despite these, not a goosepimple on the man, never a twitch to his flesh.

"Old George" He shook his head, "Corsetfaced and venereal, but you'd almost give your left nut to be as straight as he was, wouldn't you? Must be great to be right in at the start, eh?"

"Not roots in the form of a propellor," I ventured.

"Hey I like that!" Arnold cried, laughing. "That's a shape I go for," his hands gripped and described. His face freckles buckshot. "Well," lowgear nostalgia now, "I get me that little pile, and I'm not staying." Arnold hitchhiked his lean gaze east toward the sea. "A couple more thousand and I'm there."

"France?"

"Why not? Van Gogh land. Cezanne country, man. The sun and the vineyards. Why not? I got plenty training here, pressing the atomic grapes. I took the dirty socks off my brains, and lo! my friend, I beheld them naked feet. I yearn to see women in that role again. I'll teach. A pressing problem," Arnold tacked on, wistful, boyish.

"Seen Sylvia lately?" I was being, really, no more than polite. I had begun to get a little impatient, a little bored, a little resentful. Back of that, I guess, the feeling that the noon hour was coming to an end; and that the river and the *Contessa* and the gulls and the beebeshot sunlight on the water and the wind that tripped up the bloodcells—should all terminate, that I had to return to my bread-earning, and that I should get away from the scene as rapidly as possible, that I didn't deserve it any longer, couldn't. Besides, Thomas Lombino had slipped back into my mind before I knew it, his dark profile of nuances, and had declared some sort of demand, more important than my old acquaintance Arnold. And, all at once, for no discernible reason, I was angry at George Washington. Well, maybe there might have been a reason, but how likely was it? Let me try to be more accurate. I think I was angry, really, at the brass plaque on the steamship building. I wanted to rip it off. Why? I said, perhaps a reason. I had the feeling that only an impression of a brass plaque should remain; angry that something precise, and a shining precision at that, reminded onlookers, who did not look on, that grateful countrymen . . . you know the rest. Angry. That the brass plaque should have singled me out? To look. And that something wet had overtaken my eye. Good god what sentimentality . . . hearing the man's speech . . . great man . . . stern and noble figure . . . stalwart . . . courage. An idol. Who wanted an idol? Did I? Somebody gigantically impressive? Wide-shouldered and imperturbable. Rockribbed. Clearing the forests. Sterngutted men. Idols? I—what a mishmash. Hell, settle it quickly with a female reference, banal, the more banal the better. Sylvia Jessup, a fine banal polite ending.

"Nah," the sandyhaired gull said, roundshouldered on the dock, the river swallowing mucus beneath. "I don't even know where that hominy and grits virgin lives any more," Arnold flew his eyes around, he was on the smellout for something, something, a negotiable dead fish perhaps, or a flabby old symbol nobody wanted any more, like a halfstarved glasseyed tomcat maybe, which he could mother and fatten up, and

out of one last desperate sadistic splurge ram into a little pussy just out of the sac. Certainly, into some little baby pussy, who couldn't even see yet. That would have big significance for Arnold, make him feel like some crazy sort of man, but a male human, however balled up. At that, Europe might be just the place for the gull to commit that sort of act. "Hell, I haven't even seen my mother for at least thirty days and thirty nights. Out in Brooklyn somewhere, she is, I mean. I send her money and make sure to forget the address after I write it."

"I thought you prayed for Sylvia, Arnold."

"I prayed she'd have breasts, honesttogod."

"Prayed hard."

"Yeh." He picked up a pebble and flicked it in the river. The scaffolded painters dabbed orange at the flanks of steel, grinned lazily and shouted at anybody passing underneath. In the distance, way up Wall Street, Trinity Church squatted like an undernourished owl. I glanced at my wristwatch and said I had to get back to the office. I didn't bother to take a last sweep at the river after we turned to cross the street. After all, a few feet away, the young man and young woman still intensely admired each other. On the way over, Arnold started to string out Sylvia.

"But I was afraid to find out if my prayers had been answered," he said.

A bunch of lean gray-demeaned structures, that's what they were, those vandyked fanatical Wall Street skyscrapers. Standing at some soundless prayer-meeting, so damned quietly fanatic and monstrously smug they wouldn't say a word. Queerly-evolved quaker aristocrats, say. Immensely tall steel and stone riverweeds—inbred. Crowded together, yet each a sharply defined pride, holding to their breasts the untouchable scrolls of ego. Stiff elongated zipper-eyed saints. And not a tinkle of coin in their pockets. Nothing so sentimental as cash around. Who needed it?

"Would they have financed George, do you think?" I swung on Arnold.

"Who's 'they'?"

"Never mind." We were rubbing shoulders with the brass plaque.

"Got a minute for Sylvia?" Arnold whined.

The sun had gone silver under cloud; the air was probably no less warm, but one had the feeling it should be distinctly colder, to conform with one's sight. My eyelids shivered. And I gave a short laugh, selfrelenting, which, for the moment, I thought I might as well pass on to Arnold. My transitory largesse, of which we are all capable, before we crawl into one comfortable crisis or another. Amazing, the way we positively tie strings around the fingers of our crises, lest we forget. How else feel tiptoe? All senses alert. Shows other people how snapfingered your intelligence is. Frankly, though, I couldn't attach a name to my particular crisis, and I wasn't sure if I'd eventually be able to, either. All I knew was that it had something to do with a brass plaque and Thomas Lombino.

"Sure," I said.

Meanwhile, the typists and the clerks, the office managers and the receptionists, the credit men and the statistical calculators, the messenger boys and the office boys, the stenographers and the junior execs, bespectacled and slickhaired, loudmouthed and quiverskinned, an occasional contemptuous and pompous senior executive frigid and silent amongst them, pushed the revolving door of the entrance around and around, that epic chromium and glass turnstile monument the tribe itself had erected, which, possibly for the first time, the tribe was quite unaware of, the erection having had the core purpose of unawareness. It was the first monument, and idol, fashioned from the necessity of formulating an image that could be passed around, so that two drives could be satisfied, the traditional need for an object to worship, and the growing need to have contained within that object another which one could avoid worshipping. The turnstile at any entrance-exit was the perfect solution. Any year now, we would install the turnstile in our homes. Between bedroom and toilet, as a matter of fact. Between baby's room and its parents. If one were small enough, though, I suddenly

grinned, one could pass underneath any kind of turnstile without moving it an inch.

"I thought I saw George Washington go through the revolving door," I laughed, "but I have a minute for Sylvia," I added to Arnold, who already had developed the callous graciousness not to have observed that I had for a moment preferred madness. It struck me that something was wrong about the dark nuances of Thomas Lombino; that he was a vast and twisted liar, repelled by his own sensitivity, what I was certain was sensitivity, naked neurons, call it what you want. Perhaps the point was, What did I want? And what did I expect of a man whom, really, I had seen only for a day or two. What did I know of him except that he had shrugged off from his noon hour cronies and had gone to stare at the river. "Giddyap with Sylvia, Arnold."

Arnold the baby-ancient trickleshouldered gull, considerably shorter than I, pinned me against the brass plaque. By the very force of his shortness. Although I mulled over the responsibility to permit every once in a while the smaller to overshadow the larger.

And he harangued me. "Listen, it wasn't I didn't have a larger than life attachment to Sylvia. First of all, she was four inches taller than me. Which I couldn't resist." He giggled. "Imagine, I just thought that instead of craning my neck to look at her I might've had to crane my genitals. Pretty good, heh?" He didn't wait for my circumdecision. "Listen. She was a pal. She arranged celebrations for my birthday, she bought tickets when I was out of town, for concerts when I'd come in, even though she couldn't go for my kind of music, she liked that lousy hillbilly stuff and symphonic jazz crap, you don't know the hundreds of her records I suffered through. But she was a pal. She'd go into any bar in town with me, and stay, mind you, drink for drink. Sylvia the hominy and grits virgin could put it away. She had a wooden uterus. Hell, Ulysses slept there!" he cackled, "Ulysses in the Trojan uterus. There's a moral in that," he interpolated darkly, "but right now I can't figure it. I could depend on Sylvia. No matter how loaded I got, she

steered me to bed, she never fell on her azimuth. All right, she never got in beside me, I concede that."

"So?"

"I'm saying, I'm saying! She was generous with everything except sex. About the only thing she ever did to my pants was to bore them off—which made everything null and void anyhow—with her yarns about her crippled cantankerous father and her taciturn mother and her beautiful sister, who got married young, who got knocked up quick, who had a fine fat blond manchild right away. And Sylvia used to knock herself out how she was so much uglier than her sister; actually, from the pix, her sister had a couple more curves, but Sylvia was better looking, except she looked more like a boy. Not that Sylvia ever complained. Hell, no. Never sick a day in her life, the way she had it. I never saw her sick, myself. She could look bilious, but she walked. She could look green under the armpits, but she walked. I've seen her at a slant, but she walked. I had to admire it." He fell immensely silent, mapping the sidewalk. I inched away. He sadly lifted up his sauterne-colored eyes, faintly accusing, and he followed me through the revolving door, and, while we were waiting for the elevator, I thought I would ask him, gently.

"So why did you split with her?" I said, very gently.

In low shamed tones Arnold replied, "She kept picking her nose in public."

We said we'd see each other around as I got off at my floor, and the last glimpse I had of Arnold was the little scrawny gull in its cheap shredded feathers and its head sunk between its scant shoulders, pinstriped. I may have been wrong, but I thought I saw the man shiver when the elevator doors slid shut. In time, though, I will manage to think that Arnold never shivered—not once.

Oddly enough, I didn't bother about Thomas Lombino the rest of that afternoon. I thought very little about him till I saw him in the men's room, close to quitting time. I rather consistently attended to my job, checking claims on damage and pilferage to ships' cargos. Once or twice, as my eyes

swung round the office, I couldn't help but observe him jawed over his shiny new green calculator, multiplying, dividing, adding—punching the keys in light contempt, while he deigned swiftly to absorb the numerical result after the top of the machine had buzzed its twitches; a short broadshouldered man with disappearing hips. I was really no more interested in him then than in the man occupying an adjacent desk, a John Habig, about the same size, though far more blocklike in his build, who I thought acted a bit furtively when he consulted Lombino on some matter or another. If I was taken by anybody in the office, it was by its managers, two brothers, who tickled me: they had been with the company something like thirty years; one was married, the other a bachelor; both resembled, facially, cucumbers bashed in at the middle; and I recalled that yesterday, just before both had left, practically arm in arm with an umbrella between them, they had barely dared to mutter goodnight to the people at the front desks. But, as I say, I stuck fairly close to my work, and the thing that actually ran through my mind was a picture of Sylvia Jessup picking her nose in public, and I couldn't refrain from chuckling aloud intermittently. I could imagine Arnold swiftly downing a shot of bourbon each time she stuck a finger in.

Typewriters kept clacking away, calculators buzzing, phones ringing; stenos gingerly lifted their pocketbooks each three-quarters of an hour, punctually, to wind with stately modestly their petite ballroom march to the Ladies Room. Really, I was quite light-hearted. My mind finally developed the image of George Washington picking his nose. I wondered, vaguely, what had happened to my crisis. What crisis? George Washington was picking his nose. Successively: at Valley Forge, to keep his fingers warm; at the crossing of the Delaware, to present the attitude of supreme indifference to the Fates, or the Hessians, whoever they were; at his First Inaugural, to show how democracy should take root. By that time, four-thirty had arrived, and everybody was ready to wash up. I shuffled to the Men's Room with the others.

Half the male office force was straightening ties, combing

hair, bending over the washstands, relaxing around, smoking, bantering.

Thomas Lombino was there, and John Habig; the latter had come in furtively, sourfaced, and was the only one who wasn't taking part in the general give-and-take besides myself, to whom nobody paid much attention.

Habig, in shirtsleeves, curved over a bowl, slowly soaping himself, and not saying a word. Lombino, to my total astonishment, was clowning away at the greatest rate of anyone, his dark profile of nuances glittering in the shining white toilet, and talking at staggering speed out of the corner of his mouth, his body twitching this way and that, as though each time he punched out a word he computed his organism. The mirrors over the washstands brilliantly crowded the room. The jeering urine acids ate at the tobacco odors. Somebody laughed about how John Habig would forever come running down the hallway for the elevator, habitually the last to stuff himself in. Everybody guffawed. Lombino mimicked a homosexual. Habig had offered no comment on his own tardiness, and continued his cleansing, arms, neck and rather set face. Lombino doubletalked, rattled off a couple dirty jokes, playfully dug somebody in the belly, spun on his heel and disconcerted another by a remark that Habig was making himself up in whiteface, whereupon everybody again laughed immoderately, booming in the confined space, Habig still lacking retort, or refusing to utter any. It took no deep insight to gather that John Habig apparently constituted the chief butt of the group, and Lombino the principal comic, whom I found impossible to evoke staring at the river. I lit a cigarette, and turned away, light-heartedness looted; on the other hand, neither was I tense, nor did I possess any feeling of entering a comfortable crisis; instead, after my astonishment on having witnessed Lombino break into his broad and spiteful humor had left me, I experienced a most inexplicable and profound emptiness. Surely I had been right in sensing that Lombino, at least to me, was a liar in relation to that responsive individual intently gazing at the Hudson—but a vast and twisted liar? Sheer

exaggeration. Lombino's dimensions were patently small, through and through. That, however, provided no explanation of my emptiness, which possibly had come about as though something had been taken out of me, away. And I had left George Washington when I had entered the men's room. I shook my head. I looked about and noticed that Lombino had maneuvered to stand behind Habig, now washing the soap from his face. A group had formed around Lombino, so that I couldn't detect his actions, apparently connected with the unsuspecting Habig. Small chuckles from the watching men were expanding into howls. Lombino grinned viciously. The mirrors thrashed with faces thrown back and flashing fragmented distortions. And when at the moment all save Habig bellowed uncontrollably, he swiftly wheeled, Lombino falling back, Lombino's brilliantly white teeth chewing a positively high female laughter, his mouth sucking the jeering urinal acid stink. Habig was flushing a muddy crimson and breathing heavily, his neck muscles rubbery pipelines as he whipped his skull to one side and down, and his hands clawed—I could at last discern—his hands clawed at what Lombino obviously had managed to pin on his trouser seat.

I rushed out and, after reaching the street, not daring to glance back at the corner of the building where the brass commemoration of George Washington should still have been, I made for the subway, nearly breaking my gut in two over a turnstile, and finally got home. I headed straight for the toilet and, clearly quite well prepared to substantiate emptiness, vomited. However, there had been nothing more pinned to John Habig's ass than a cardboard plaque.

Dickens and Kafka: "The Technique of the Grotesque"¹

IF DICKENS and Kafka are "infantile" writers, arrested at childhood levels of sensibility, their art is not neurotic. The damage of neurosis is evident, of course, in Dickens' sentimentality, or in Kafka's fragmentary efforts, his inability to finish novels or carry shorter tales beyond inception. But, allowing for such flaws, the arrested sensibility indicates a stance, a shaping point of view, from which the artist comprehends experience. His vision of the world is an aesthetic construct, a model of significant reality, and not a madman's fancy. The exquisite children of James, Proust and Mann, or the hardboiled adolescents of Twain and Hemingway, are informing points of view. Their respective origins, in homes of cultural refinement or frontier crudity, account for textural variation. A Kafkan or Dickensian child is equally informing, though neither hardboiled nor refined. He is a hothouse product, raised in stifling domesticity, like Proust or Mann, but under rising middle class conditions. Filled with false pretensions to gentility, or educated beyond his parents' background, he tumbles ill-equipped into an urban muddle and sharply renders its confusion. And since he stands alone, at the heart of metropolis, with neither art nor outdoor life for refuge, his vision is remarkably pristine. True enough, his vision *seems* distorted, but this is only from

an adult perspective. His metropolitan nightmares are not unreal: they simply emanate from the fixed outlook of an abandoned child. Excluded from or within their homes, repulsed by bureaucratic and commercial fathers, and crippled by their sexual inhibitions, such children see the world in terms of grotesque comedy.

According to Wolfgang Kayser, the grotesque can be identified by these salient traits: distortion of the external scene, fusion of human and animal shapes, and mingling of reality and dream. These strange effects rouse laughter, horror and perplexity in the observer, with laughter serving to diminish horror and perplexity, and so make the nightmare scene more bearable.² The infantile perspective seems designed by nature to accommodate such traits. For one thing, the child's view of the world is literally oblique; he stands below the sight-line of adult activity, for which the manmade scene is built. For another, his view is often animistic; and since his wishes are subordinate to adult commands, he sometimes shares with animals their subhuman status. He also lacks control of inner promptings, and projects them into the scene before him, as we do in dreams. Finally, his affective innocence, his capacity for free and natural feeling, proves reassuring as the world around him cracks and topples.

In modern times the world itself accommodates the grotesque. Our squalid, crowded urban mazes, our underprivileged classes reduced to something like subhuman status, and our personalities shattered by disruptive tensions, suggest the points of correspondence. For Dickens and Kafka, living at early and advanced stages of the industrial revolution, oppressed by squalor and obsessed with childhood problems, the conjunction of time, method and arrested sensibility proved ideal. They fashioned models of the grotesque from urban and commercial culture, and from their own compelling need for inner peace.

For with both writers, the grotesque became a way of mastering reality through comic means. They shaped their worlds as prisons, mazes or immense bureaucracies, which foster conscious and unconscious terrors; but in marking out

the absurdity of those prisons, and in supporting human worth, they rose above projected fears. They did not go beyond them, though this sometimes seems to happen in a Dickens novel; but they did escape them through transcendent comedy. Their need for spiritual relief began in childhood, with their first awareness of sex and physiology.

Most children are preoccupied with growth and change, with clumsiness in games or sports, with bulky clothes and awkward manners. Their problems are acutely physical, and this must hold especially true for sickly boys, like Dickens and Kafka, who watched or read while other children played, and who tried to compensate for this, in later years, by intense athleticism. They were also sensitive about dress, throughout adulthood, though both were fairly handsome in appearance. Dickens' dandyism might seem removed from Kafka's unobtrusive elegance, but both conform with Bergson's observation, that the lack of bodily grace is much more comic than the lack of beauty: "If . . . we were asked to define the comic by comparing it with its contrary, we should have to contrast it with gracefulness even more than with beauty. It partakes rather of the unsprightly than of the unsightly, of *rigidness* rather than of ugliness." So the concern for dress and bodily health seems directly linked with the comic spirit. The fear of awkwardness or ungainliness is reflected on the one hand by vigorous attempts to expel it, and on the other by extreme sensitivity to objects, bodies, faces, gestures, and their mechanistic nature. George Orwell almost sees this when he speaks of Dickens' gift for scene as opposed to action: "Wonderfully as he can describe an *appearance*, Dickens does not often describe a *process*. . . . In a . . . sense his attitude to life is extremely unphysical. He is a man who lives through his eyes and ears rather than through his hands and muscles." In other words, he sees grotesque appearance, but lacks an operative sense of function; like Kafka, he sees the physical as surface motion beyond his sure control.

Here too the sexual problem seems relevant, for the sense of sex is visual, in these writers, rather than physical. Their

women are never really voluptuous, and there is seldom any perception of warmth or sensual beauty in them, which a Lawrencean artist might evoke. Sexual love itself is seen as frenzied and distasteful, or (with Dickens) discreetly overlooked. These are outward signs of a condition—sexual failure—which prolongs the early sense of physical shame and intensifies awareness of things awkward or unsprightly. Consider Dickens' open impatience, in this last respect, with his wife's persistent clumsiness, or his poignant admiration for the one graceful sexual villain in his work, Steerforth. Or take Kafka's frightful description of the love of K. and Frieda in *The Castle*:

She was seeking and he was seeking, they raged and contorted their faces and bored their heads into each other's bosoms in the urgency of seeking something, and their embraces and their tossing limbs did not avail to make them forget, but only reminded them of what they sought; like dogs desperately tearing up the ground they tore at each other's bodies, and often, helplessly baffled, in a final effort to attain happiness they nuzzled and tongued each other's faces.

Whether frightful or pathetic, these signs of sexual failure again conform with Bergson's theory. He finds the comic in the reduction of spirit to matter, of grace to rigidity, of spontaneity to automatism. In his own summation:

The comic is that side of a person which reveals his likeness to a thing, that aspect of human events which, through its peculiar inelasticity, conveys the impression of pure mechanism, or automatism, of movement without life. Consequently it expresses an individual or collective imperfection which calls for an immediate corrective. This corrective is laughter, a social gesture that singles out and represses a special kind of absentmindedness in men and in events.

For Bergson, then, the comic person is blind to his rigidity; but laughter serves to expose his imperfection, and to hasten its removal, till he becomes once more a living social being. There is much here that applies to all types of comedy, and much that applies with special force to Dickens and Kafka; yet the drift of their work eludes this definition on several counts. In fact, the grotesque itself eludes this definition, with its plain assumption that the outer world has col-

lapsed, and the inner self congealed, beyond "correction"—an assumption which the later Dickens shares with Kafka, and which the early Dickens frequently implies. But if the aim of grotesque comedy is not correction, perhaps we can still define it by reversing Bergson's theory.

Consider first the trait of absentmindedness. In Dickens and Kafka the characters are *always* conscious of their private burdens. They even live with them on familiar terms, as Captain Cuttle lives with his hat, for instance, in *Dombey and Son*. Cuttle's hard glazed hat leaves a permanent red rim around his forehead. Though it sits on his head like a tight heavy basin, he wears it on all occasions, even while eating, and seems unable to meet any nice or difficult task without it. He has other comic attributes: a hook instead of a hand, a knobby nose, and a few tricks of speech; and in line with Bergson's theory he is sometimes blind to his own malfunctions. But he is always conscious of his hat. Indeed, it seems like an actual part of his body:

The Captain was one of those timber-looking men, suits of oak as well as hearts, whom it is almost impossible for the liveliest imagination to separate from any part of their dress . . . Accordingly, when Walters knocked at the door, and the Captain instantly poked his head out of one of his little front windows, and hailed him, with the hard glazed hat already on it, and the shirt-collar like a sail, and the wide suit of blue, all standing as usual, Walter was as fully persuaded that he was always in that state, as if the Captain had been a bird and those had been his feathers. The Captain never dreamed that in the event of his being pounced upon by Mrs. MacStinger, in his walks, it would be possible to offer resistance. He felt that it could not be done. He saw himself, in his mind's eye, put meekly in a hackney-coach, and carried off to his old lodgings. He foresaw that, once immured there, he was a lost man: his hat gone; Mrs. MacStinger watchful of him day and night; reproaches heaped upon his head, before the infant family; himself the guilty object of suspicion and distrust; an ogre in the children's eyes, and in their mother's a detected traitor.

Here Cuttle sticks to his clothes as Barkis sticks to his box, in *David Copperfield*, with infantile adhesion. He lodges in the home of Mrs. MacStinger, a widow who has been blessed with swarms of sprawling children. She treats the Captain with especial care, and teaches her infants "to love and

honour him" like a father. Of course, she sees him as a potential husband, while Cuttle sees her as a dreadful man-trap. He has a small boy's idea of marriage, and he views the widow with decided fear and trembling. The widow understands him well enough: when she wants him to stay in his quarters, she simply impounds his hat, and he is unable to leave without it. "She stopped my liberty," he says of one impounding; but even when he escapes her lodgings, later on, he remains her helpless victim:

The Captain never dreamed that in the event of his being pounced upon by Mrs. MacStinger, in his walks, it would be possible to offer resistance. He felt that it could not be done. He saw himself, in his mind's eye, put meekly in a hackney-coach, and carried off to his old lodgings. He foresaw that, once immured there, he was a lost man: his hat gone; Mrs. MacStinger watchful of him day and night; reproaches heaped upon his head, before the infant family; himself the guilty object of suspicion and distrust; an ogre in the children's eyes, and in their mother's a detected traitor.

The lines are clearly drawn here: on the one hand, there is Cuttle's hat, which he seems to depend on for emotional security; on the other, there is Mrs. MacStinger and her swarming infants, who represent the abhorrent weight of adult responsibility; and behind it all, on the biographical level, there is Dickens' growing desire to leave his wife and burgeoning family, and his guilt at harboring such thoughts.

Yet Dickens enlists our sympathies in Cuttle's cause. He grants him the dignity of his private burden, which is less oppressive, after all, than the potential weight of the MacStinger brood; and he gives him a place to live at the edge of society, in the instrument shop of his friend, Solomon Gills. As Kathleen Tillotson has shown in *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, there is a marked distinction between this shop and the rest of London, which is now being uprooted by the railroads and by commercial expansion. Dickens makes no attempt to align Cuttle with this new society; he makes no attempt to remove his faults through laughter. Instead, he allows him the privilege of his own pain, and a small section of the world in which to enjoy it. As a rule, he is much more critical of society than of his favorite comic figures.

Perhaps his humor is more Freudian than Bergsonian, for in the choice between Mrs. MacStinger and the Captain's hat, there is a decided "economy in the expenditure of emotion." Yet Freud's definition of the comic seems too niggardly here; he reduces it to a mere "discharge of psychic energy," and explains it as disguised regression: "For the euphoria which we are thus striving to obtain is nothing but the state of a bygone time, in which we were wont to defray our psychic work with slight expenditure. It is the state of our childhood in which we did not know the comic, were incapable of wit, and did not need humor to make us happy."

With Dickens and Kafka, however, the comic seems more like a release from present childhood pain. They grant the regression, they grant the childishness of Cuttle's preoccupation with his hat, or the perverseness of Gregor Samsa's insect state. But beyond this they attempt to reveal the human spirit, alive and responsive in the cage of its own making. When Cuttle retreats to the instrument shop, for example, he lives there like the furtive animal in Kafka's story, "The Burrow." The enemy in each case is the prospect of adult involvement, and the defensive preparations are equally elaborate.

What the Captain suffered . . . whenever a bonnet passed, or how often he darted out of the shop to elude imaginary MacStingers, and sought safety in the attic, cannot be told. But to avoid the fatigues attendant on this means of self-preservation, the Captain curtained the glass door of communication between the shop and parlour, on the inside, fitted a key to it . . . and cut a small hole of espial in the wall. The advantage of this fortification is obvious. On a bonnet appearing, the Captain instantly slipped into his garrison, locked himself up, and took a secret observation of the enemy. Find it a false alarm, the Captain instantly slipped out again. And the bonnets in the street were so very numerous, and alarms were so inseparable from their appearance, that the Captain was almost incessantly slipping in and out all day long.

As the weeks fly by the Captain is not deceived by absence of the enemy. He continues with his "prudent provisions against surprise," and lives "a very close and retired life; seldom stirring abroad until after dark; venturing even then only into the obscurest streets; never going forth at all on

Sundays; and both within and without the walls of his retreat, avoiding bonnets; as if they were worn by raging lions." He soon develops "a regular routine of defensive operations," and never encounters a bonnet "without previous survey from his castle of retreat."

It seems obvious that Cuttle lives within the compass of his own fears; his enemy is more internal than external, though his confinement renders visible his amazing self-absorption. As V. S. Pritchett notes, many of Dickens' comic figures "live or speak as if they were *the only self in the world*."² Cuttle is one of these "solitaries"; he lives by his fixed, private idea of Mrs. MacStinger, and Dickens dramatizes his obsession in a manner Kafka follows in "The Burrow." There too the animal lives by a fixed idea. His burrow is not only a refuge, but a source of extreme self-satisfaction and self-affright. Like Cuttle, he lives in fear of intrusion from the outside; he keeps vigil at the entrance, and devises a whole labyrinth of cells and passages to insure his safety; he too considers his retreat his castle, and at times takes daring excursions into the outer world. Of course his self-absorption is more harrowing and extensive than Cuttle's, and more difficult to fathom; but each of these works displays the power of the human spirit in regression. Our pleasure lies not in the correction of rigidity nor in the return to childhood bliss, but in the revelation of life where life can scarcely flourish. In *Notes from the Underground* another master of the grotesque understood this, and made it the heart of his attack on mechanistic science: his underground man is fully aware of his perverseness; but he embraces it, as if by choice, in order to preserve his individuality, and with comic brilliance he performs an intellectual dance within the limits of his psychic prison. He seems more alive, says Dostoevsky, than the normal man of the nineteenth century who ignores the collapse of humanistic values and blindly accepts his status as an "organ-stop."

So Bergson's theory seems to work in reverse for grotesque comedy, or with major premises reversed. For the grotesque affirms the assertive spirit, or the active play of conscious

feeling, in the very process of reduction. Its comic figures are supremely aware of their fixations: they accept the mechanical, they embrace their fears and obsessions, and by doing so they actually seem to transcend them. "A lost man: his hat gone," thinks Captain Cuttle, and his capacity to conceive this thought delights us. In "The Burrow" the ground is more dangerous, the absorption more intense; yet the situation is made bearable by the animal's strange aesthetic pleasure in the construction of his labyrinth. And in Dostoevsky's tale the hero's subterranean antics yield the same assurance. As Edward Sackville-West writes of a similar Kafka situation: "Such an image reveals a fresh aspect of truth. To accept its full impact is to be encouraged to endure." That is the whole point: the soul still flourishes in the cage of its own making; it *transcends* the mechanical, and our reassurance comes from this discovery.

There are fine examples of this among Dickens' villains. In *Oliver Twist*, for instance, the Jew Fagin seems like an encrustation of evil. His "villainous-looking and repulsive face" is obscured by matted red hair, and his shrivelled body is dressed in a greasy flannel gown. These are the visible signs of his greed and cruelty. Yet when Oliver enters the thieves' den, he is soon amazed by Fagin's hidden powers. After breakfast, the "merry old gentleman" and his boys play a cruious game. Fagin places various trinkets about his person, buttons his coat tightly, and trots up and down the room with a stick, "in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the streets." He stops before the door or fireplace, as if staring into shop-windows: "At such times, he would look constantly around him, for fear of thieves, and keep slapping all his pockets in turn, to see that he hadn't lost anything, in such a very funny and natural manner that Oliver laughed till the tears ran down his face." Meanwhile the two boys follow him closely, skipping nimbly out of sight with every turn, then stumbling up against him and stealing all his trinkets with amazing rapidity. If Fagin feels a hand in his pockets, he cries out where it is and the game begins again.

Why should Oliver laugh at Fagin's actions? What makes the wicked man appealing? Bergson's answer is clear: Fagin has been imitating an inflexible dupe, an inelastic man who is unprepared for thieves; and beyond this, imitation itself suggests the action of a machine, so that the honest citizen looks like an automaton. Yet this is scarcely Dickens' point: he puts little stress upon the act of imitation; instead he uses the *fact* of imitation to surprise us. Here in the dark, foul den of thieves and prostitutes, a greasy Jew is dancing! This is what causes Oliver to laugh so heartily. And this is what remains with us, long after we have forgotten Fagin's bestiality. The life, the imagination, the cleverness of the old man, shine forth from beneath his matted hair; and like so many of Dickens' villains, he captivates us. We are less impressed with his eventual punishment than with the force of his personality.

The principle of humanity in comic villains becomes overt in Dostoevsky's fiction. The compulsive buffoon, Fyodor Karamazov, insults and lacerates an entire monastery, and converts a pious businessman to his anti-faith. From the author's point of view, his buffoonery is defensive, a perverse display of his own inadequacy performed with comic zest. Like Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Karamazov is a master of sadistic play; his clever insults, his acute perception of human weakness, are part of a general campaign to advertise his need for love. His conduct is roughly that of a child, rejected by his parents, who deliberately accentuates his faults to gain attention. The result, paradoxically, is a brilliant demonstration of potential worth. Dickens' grasp of this potential was instinctive rather than conscious. His Quilps and Fagins possess amazing vitality and attractiveness, though in the end they prove collapsible and rather empty. They belong, in this respect, to the realm of fairy tale and legend: their forms are loosely equated with evil, and their defeat is always inevitable. They fall apart like the giant Pride, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, who topples like a set of wooden boxes. This seems in keeping with the dreamlike quality of Dickens' world, where wishes are fulfilled and

fears dispersed, as legend supersedes reality—at least in the early novels.

In contrast, Kafka's dreamlike scenes are legends in reverse. His villains seldom fail, and he rarely leavens their success by granting human worth. Yet like Dickens he equates the flesh with evil and distorts its form. He avoids the loose effect of evil, however, by investing his parental figures with the sexual power and authority Dickens sometimes gives to parents, and by investing the bodies or possessions of their victims with the potential weight of Dickens' hats and boxes. In other words, he combines the mechanical with hidden fears and obsessions drawn from childhood. As his diaries suggest, this combination begins with physical and mental illness or distress. When his body ails him, "a lid the size of a gulden moves up or down" his gullet; his heart can scarcely pump the blood to his knees, and from there it spills "with a senile strength" into the colder legs below; when a key turns in the lock, he feels locks open and shut through-out his frame. Indeed, his total corpus is mechanical:

This block and tackle of the inner being. A small lever is somewhere secretly released, one is hardly aware of it at first, and at once the whole apparatus is in motion. Subject to an incomprehensible power, as the watch seems subject to time, it creaks here and there, and all the chains clank down their prescribed path one after the other.

Then there are the sexual images: his dream about the prostitute with large red sores all over her body; his nausea at the nudist camp, and his comic admission—"All except me without swimming trunks"; finally, at the root of the trouble, his loathing for the sexual relations of his parents:

The sight of the double bed at home, the used sheets, the night-shirts carefully laid out, can exasperate me to the point of nausea, can turn me inside out; it is as if I had not been definitely born, were continually born anew into the world out of the stale life in that stale room, had constantly to seek confirmation of myself there, were indissolubly joined with all that loathsomeness, in part even if not entirely, at least it still clogs my feet which want to run, they are still stuck fast in the original shapeless pulp.

Out of this combination of sickness and disgust come the images of vermin, jackals, apes and dogs in Kafka's stories. They are images of the spirit trapped by the flesh, or by the unconscious made visible. For in Kafka's world the body is directly linked with sexual shame and guilt; its pain reveals the soul's decline; its shape suggests the contours of the ailing spirit. "There is only a spiritual world," he writes; "what we call the physical world is the evil in the spiritual." The evil externalized, that is, or the unconscious tumbled inside out and its vileness given shape and motion, as it is in dreams. The grotesque has always been connected with the obscene, and its urban masters, from Hoffmann through Gogol, Dostoevsky and Dickens, have used it to express the unconscious. But Kafka was the first to explore that realm with the help of Freudian theory, and to deepen and enrich the form with conscious knowledge and control. In *The Metamorphosis*, for instance, the crust on Gregor Samsa is the mode of his regression; his psychic "evils" have crystallized and risen to the surface, and his conscious self (which still retains its finer possibilities) is trapped within their insect shape. His condition is absurd, horrible, painful and pathetic, but these are the very elements of grotesque comedy, and Kafka handles them with wry precision. There is no need to establish all the details. It is enough to mention the little play of courtesy between Gregor and his sister; his clumsy attempts to maneuver with his giant body; or the revolting aspects of his diet. What is important is the rich and careful portrayal of a way of life, an existence which continues under the most adverse conditions. For the principle at stake is Gregor's humanity, not his vileness. Edward Sackville-West rightly insists on this, as he compares the humor of Kafka with that of Dostoevsky and Dickens:

More bitter and ironic, it is equally near to hysteria. In all three writers an effect of wild comedy arises from our perception of sane characters whose behavior could hardly be less adaptable if they were mad. Yet the moment we think of them as mad, or even poor in humanity, they cease to be funny.

The issue, then, is Gregor's humanity, with madness reduc-

ed to outward action and appearance, or to externalized evil. Like other Kafka heroes, Gregor cannot adapt himself to society. His transformation is final, and the only solution for it seems to be death, yet his soul is larger, in the long run, than the shape of its corruption. This is what Kafka wants to reveal, and for this reason (among others) he begins his story with the beetle image, then moves beyond it. When Gregor first appears before the family, they are appalled by his condition, and their revulsion gives the full measure of his deformity. But it also throws his own reactions into full relief. Whenever his sister enters the room, she feels suffocated and immediately flings open the window—which distresses Gregor terribly; the mother screams or faints at his appearance, though he only wants to help her; and the father shoos him back with a stick or, blind to his good intentions, hurls apples at his retreating figure. Occasionally their revulsion is mixed with token acts of kindness, but in general they stagger under the burden of their shame; they live in a state of tension till his death, for they are chiefly impressed by Gregor's monstrousness. Their attitude is typical of the middle class, and Kafka underscores the point by introducing an old charwoman, late in the story, for dramatic contrast:

This old widow, whose strong bony frame had enabled her to survive the worst a long life could offer, by no means recoiled from Gregor. Without being in the least curious she had once by chance opened the door of his room and at the sight of Gregor, who, taken by surprise, began to rush to and fro although no one was chasing him, merely stood there with her arms folded. From that time she never failed to open his door a little for a moment, morning and evening, to have a look at him. At first she even used to call him to her, with words which apparently she took to be friendly, such as, "Come along, then, you old dung beetle!" or "Look at the old dung beetle, then!" To all such allocutions Gregor made no answer, but stayed motionless where he was, as if the door had never been opened. Instead of being allowed to disturb him so senselessly whenever the whim took her, she should rather have been ordered to clean out his room daily, that charwoman!

Gregor misses the friendly nature of her words and reacts with bourgeois indignation. One day he even tries to attack

her, but when she calmly lifts a chair to beat him back, he turns away. His annoyance seems pathetic: for the first time in the story another human being has been willing to accept him. She is not repelled by his appearance; in fact, she addresses him directly (as none of his family will except in anger), and the tension noticeably lifts with her marvellous lines, "Come along, then, you old dung beetle!" For the words are couched as a friendly insult; they give a name to his affliction, they include and absorb deformity through acceptance, and so accentuate his human worth. Kafka himself confirms this as he defends the "mentally ill" in *The Brothers Karamazov*:

They aren't ill. Their illness is merely a way to characterize them, and moreover a very delicate and fruitful one. One need only stubbornly keep repeating of a person that he is simpleminded and idiotic, and he will, if he has the Dostoevskian core inside him, be spurred on, as it were, to do his very best. His characterizations have in this respect about the same significance as insults among friends. If they say to one another, "You're a blockhead," they don't mean that the other is really a blockhead who has disgraced them by his friendship; rather there is generally mixed in it an infinite number of intentions, if the insult isn't merely a joke, or even if it is. Thus, the father of the Karamazovs, though a wicked creature, is by no means a fool but rather a very clever man, almost the equal of Ivan, and in any case much cleverer than his cousin, for example, whom the novelist doesn't attack, or his nephew, the landowner, who feels so superior compared to him.

In the cleverness of Fyodor Karamazov, Kafka recognizes his humanity; in illness as a fruitful mode of characterization, he finds a precedent for his own creations; and in the concept of the friendly insult he reveals his purpose in *The Metamorphosis*. For the charwoman's insults are the clue to Gregor's worth. By naming his affliction she repeats in miniature the very process which Kafka has employed throughout the story. He too accepts the mechanical, or the regressive nature of Gregor's change; and by carefully marking out his noxious way of life, he too reveals the human qualities of the giant insect. Charles Neider writes that humor "is an element of suspense in Kafka; its cathartic effect is slight." But the charwoman scene suggests that *horror* is the element

of suspense in Kafka, and that his humor is persistently transcendent—a release from pain, a way of dealing with reductive traps and burdens, a way of making life more bearable, that is, through spiritual assertion.

Dickens works for similar ends in *David Copperfield* especially in the confinement scene, where David is locked in his room five days for biting Murdstone's hand. Though Murdstone calls him "an obstinate horse or dog" and whips him into a swollen, brutish shape, his words and acts confirm the boy's humanity. And though Miss Murdstone fixes him with righteous glares, and even his mother avoids him, Nurse Peggotty comforts him at night through the keyhole, in comic bursts of speech. In other words, his bourgeois family treats him with abhorrence, while the hearty servant reaffirms his worth.³ As I have elsewhere argued, her affection rouses sexual feeling, in keeping with the author's penchant for diffusing sex and sentiment. The mixture seems disturbing, since Dickens lacks control of its proportions. Yet David's need for love is genuine, and his punishment is severe enough to aggravate neurosis. The aesthetic damage here is slight, as it is through much of the novel. In this book, more than others, Dickens meets his private anguish with strong fidelity to boyhood feeling. David's fear of his father's resurrection which he connects with Murdstone's marriage to his mother; his identification with Murdstone's baby, at his mother's breast; his identification with Barkis, when the carrier marries Peggotty; and his blind support of Steerforth, in his seduction of little Em'ly, suggest the projective quality of the novel, while the troubling or vicarious deaths of father, carrier, child and friend confirm its psychic depth. This authentic handling of projection shows how closely Dickens stands alongside Kafka, in the realm of grotesque comedy. As victims of the most painful inner conflicts, both writers searched for spiritual relief, and found it in the psychological richness of transcendent humor. In Charles Neider's words (and this time they apply correctly):

Kafka's humor is the humor of pain, with empathy for the tragic object . . . Kafka's laughter is ambivalent, it is close to tears . . .

Kafka's humor is that of the awful, of disease. Together with his sense of tragedy it reveals man as . . . the fumbling, half-baked hybrid stuck fast between the animal and the spiritual.

The same could be said of Dickens, with appropriate modifications for greater warmth and less control of childhood pain. Even the potatoes in his pots knock up against the lid, because his animism, like Kafka's, is an attempt to visualize a world in which the spirit operates in fleshly prisons. Most of his comic figures are built upon this premise: in some of them the mechanical is a mere device, as with the stolid Captain Bunsby; more often it acquires subjective weight, as with Captain Cuttle, the carrier Barkis, or the half-mad spinster, Miss Havisham; and at times it draws its weight from social pressure, as with the peppery dwarf, Miss Mowcher, who complains of being treated like a toy by others, though she has natural feelings within her. "Trust me no more, but trust me no less," she asks, "than you would trust a full-sized woman." Then she waddles off through the rain, completely enveloped by a huge umbrella, which seems to hop along by itself "like an immense bird." Though Miss Mowcher is nowhere visible, her natural feelings were never more apparent: they are the force which moves the mechanical through life.

We can only feel this force through empathy. This is another element which Bergson neglects, in his attempt to limit comedy to critical and chiefly intellectual aims. He forgets that laughter is an emotional release, a spontaneous rush of natural feeling, with empathy as the likely catalyst—at least in grotesque comedy. The neo-Freudian analyst, Martin Grotjahn, is more generous. He sees laughter as a "creative communication between the unconscious and the conscious," leading toward strength and maturity through the release of repressed energies and regressive pleasures. But such "free and episodic regression" does not describe the grotesque, where the repressed remains frozen, if uprooted, and the regressive burdens and inhibits life. The source of creativity here is conscious feeling; it corresponds with the free play of emotion during childhood, the quick and fluid changes, the easy flexibility which adults often lose, but which is

scarcely circumscribed by childhood. The function of the grotesque is to preserve this flow of feeling, to keep our conscious selves alive, since consciousness is an index to humanity. The value of the form should be apparent in a mechanistic age, when commerce, bureaucracy and positivistic thought reduce humanity to thinghood. And the limits of the form should be apparent in its denial of organic wholeness, its nullification of the flesh, or of the connection between flesh and feeling in adult experience. But within these limits the form preserves our sense of conscious life. This does not involve superiority over nature, as Baudelaire would have it, but triumph over thinghood. In Dickens the individual is preserved against the encroachments of dehumanizing materialism and his own repressions. These terms are shared by the early Kafka, though his world expands, in later works, where social and subjective terms are used to amplify religious paradox. His preoccupation with guilt is shared, however, by Dickens, whose sense of innocence persists in turn in the most sinful Kafka heroes. One author works through fantasy, the other through apparent realism: but both invest their work with the projective vagaries of dreams. And for both the humor is transcendent: it springs from tension between the mechanical and the living, with the spirit never wholly free of its burdens, but able to dance with them for a time, and so preserve its value. In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," the poet Yeats suggests a similar tension. The Self recites its failures: "The ignominy of childhood; the distress/Of boyhood changing into man;/The unfinished man and his pain/Brought face to face with his own clumsiness." Yet, by facing up to those failures and measuring their damage, the Self achieves its own salvation:

When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.

Dickens and Kafka were never able to achieve such blessedness; but their attempt to do so is more in keeping with ma-

turity than childhood bliss. It corresponds with "humour," which is the only form of comedy Freud affirms, because it involves the triumph of the ego over harsh reality, and the transfer of the ego's strength to its oddly beneficent super-ego. Freud seems to regard this, however, as an inferior form of psychotherapy, since in "humour" the super-ego repudiates reality and serves illusion.⁴ Yet forms of comedy which transcend internal burdens or external traps, or which flower forth within their bondage, perform a function which is perhaps more valuable, in the long run, than psychoanalysis: they affirm the very stuff and quality of consciousness, without which Freud could not pursue his quantitative system nor effect his cures. As blessings go, such small anomalies have their merit: they make life bearable for us all.

NOTES:

1. The "technique of the grotesque" is E. W. Tedlock's phrase for the method Kafka shares with Dickens. See "Kafka's Imitation of *David Copperfield*," *Comparative Literature*, VII (Winter, 1955), 61.
2. Wolfgang Kayser, *Das Groteske: seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* (Oldenburg, Germany: Gerhard Stalling, 1957).
3. I have covered this material, for different purposes, in "Kafka's Sources for *The Metamorphosis*," *Comparative Literature*, XI (Fall, 1959), 289-307. See also "David Copperfield as Psychological Fiction," *Critical Quarterly*, I (Winter, 1959), 292-301, for expanded treatment of the projective pattern in *Copperfield*.
4. Sigmund Freud, "Humour," *Collected Papers*, ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959), V, 215-221. Current ego-psychologists, who allow for the ego's shaping powers, have followed up the implications of this essay to arrive at qualitative views of humor. See especially Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).

Hy Sobiloff

Elegy to My Child Cousin

My cousin Sara Preblod and I
Played in nearby carriages
With dolls dangling between us
When distress sneaked a smothering veil
Onto our carriage top.

She died.
I stood at my age not even twelve,
At the family street corner,
Weeping faster than the rain
I saw a white coffin, child's size, prepared for her.
I have endured the street corner scene in my childhood
Battle.

Sara Preblod died at her fingered piano
As I held her music in my ear.
At first I thought that I had made her die.
As though I pushed her under the carousel kiddingly,
Because I lost the golden ring
Going round and round.
The doctor said that it was not our fun that sent her
away.
Yet such an inconsolable error is no solace for a child.

At twelve I followed in the raining procession.
I kissed her heart outside the coffin

And watched the wet smear the white pine paradox.
I listened to the elderly murmuring autonomously.
The weepers said that she was safer now as I shook in
dizzy opposition
I floundered in my day dream
And grieved my listlessness away to our secret meet-
ing place
For one whole day I was victim too.

I wrote to her and sent it somewhere far
I thought the thoughtless hand would grow weary of its
vagrancy
And would listen to the echoes of my fears
And spare me such a poverty.
This lawless cruelty could not gain my applause.
I pounded the earth and blasted the silence with an
infant's tear.

Oh hear the human brain
Wandering on the watered ground
Twelve is too young
To see such milk spilt from a glass
She will be
You wait and see
Just wait and see.

A Gentle Elegy to Such a Doctor

John Herlin needed no fame.
His acclaim from me is suddenly
His lighted life.
There are these images:
Himself, face to face with his ideal St. Luke.
When, on one sandy day near his beach
I fell.
His surgical shyness
Redeemed my malignancy,
Weaned me back to walking
When sand sank his artery,
The flowing bank, sediment delayed my heart
Until his art (what's the word?)
He used feelings, his art,
That managed the flow and kept me alive
The nearby lighthouse
Illumines his rock-path cradled in the tide
As I cup up the spiritual waves
That mourn him, his
Hippocratic fingers, like Beethoven's
Inner ear, played to my need,
His fate all the mourners feel
That touch the ocean's bower and
Rip the reef. His shyness stems
Those tears that babbled on the ocean's
Forum; I am uttering the hope of my gray hairs,

Standing with a fisherman's net
As a hammock

Searching for him—he is not here.

Robert Henrie

What Thing

I smashed an infant's face when I smashed Bummer
Hyland's.
Manly, as best he could, Bummer briefly raised his
small fists.
Answering honor, as best he could, Bummer tightened
his lip
And bristled a little time till my heavier fists crashed
him down,
Loosened his face into helpless unhappiness.

An animal Hun swinging a child against the jamb
I choked the cry halfway in Bummer's throat,
Reeled his blue eyes into the stucco wall,
Thudded the mute malleable skull as if it had wronged
me.

Bummer didn't know and I didn't know what reckless
thing bruised us.
What thing howling in Cambrian swamps caught us
at this hour,
Abandoned us to unlove, and pitched another stone to
the cold collection,
The monstrous mountain we know.

The Parrot Collector

Days, I sit in my oriel window, scanning the traffic,
reviewing my collection,

Anxious to show you, or you my bright transplants.
Worrying, fidgeting, alert to your impression,
Laughing if you like these chattering, burnished birds.
Weeping away your indifference.

They are a thing to prick the pride, these coppery
cockatoos.

The years I've spent on them.

Burning the oil, gleaning the sources,
Cataloging, culling, working out the best representa-
tive pieces.

Let me quickly admit the faults of my group.

It lacks depth. I have perhaps sought to please too
many.

Parvenu, eclectic, dilettante are epithets I have borne.
My latest, Psittacotti Lamberti, a bewitching Colom-
bian beauty, may pacify them.

I seek always to pacify, avoid pedantry, and cultivate
the spontaneous.

And yet I have misgivings.

A friend, Mr. Krishna, laughs at my life of "bird seed
and droppings".

He can even make me feel parroteering is vain.

It's true, sometimes the screeching drives me frantic.
(Parrots in numbers never learn to say anything)

And yet I should be used to this.

I really need the din.

Nights, in the guttering light, I wrap the cages with
white,

Winding them off into a silence like hibernation or
death.
I worry about the delicate highlanders and later peep
in.
A cocked, bright eye reassures me and relieves the
spookiness of the still hour.
Going around latching doors in the quiet, I need the
succoring din.
Without it, I fancy I hear manacles rattle below in
the dark,
And have nothing to chase the wrinkled hand barring
my way on the landing.
Nothing to laugh down the raging space pressing
around my house.

Jerome Mazzaro

Committal

As your weak runtish son
Who feared the fearful bullies of the block
And wept at almost every sock,
You taught me those dry features of a man
Who bears his pain.

And imitating that,
I bore your one unchanging look as gain,

Letting no flinch nor sign of strain
Betray my endless outward conduit
Of tearless ease.

Even the bullies found
This ease too toughened to their daily blows.
Then last month, pain which built its flows
Burst, lashing through your ducts the rotting mind
We had not known.

Now in the smokeless hue
Of psycho-wards we watch your knuckling down
To take some workless medicine.
Each day we try to stave committing you
For one more day.

Like Bernard's famous tank
Which you would always use for charity,
Our charity becomes a sea
Which overflows and will not let us think
Or even be.

Your grown sons now, we try
To bear the pains of putting you away.
For your own good I want to say,
And seem again a runtish, smarting boy,
Staving his pain.

Sheila Alexander

The Burning Guitar

On chicken little errands
The diplomats are sent
While we collect injustices
And villains collect the rent.

As the dreamer riddles the night,
The worker exhausts the day
And Everyman mounts his hobby horse
Riding for too little pay.

Freud's zodiac tells us what we are,
Statistics what we will be.
Money is crowning another queen
And there is a crick in the bended knee.

The innocent weeps in his tree house.
There is a fire in his old guitar
And the sky is really falling—
About half fallen so far.

Eunice

"How did I feel?"
"I felt all throwed away
Like an old shoe in the rain
Or a chicken heart
In a butcher's hand
Was how I felt,
And blue as a week of Mondays."

"I felt," she said,
"Shades blacker than my skin,
Like there wasn't no place
Low enough
To hide my feelings in."

"It wasn't," she said,
"The jail I was in
But the world I was out of
Made me cry.
Not that I was so wrong,
But nobody else was right
Is why."

"You don't know
What a bad time is.
Girl, you livin' child's play
Til they sweep you under the rug
And you feel
All throwed away."

Rosemary Burns

Summer Solitude

Daisy curling up and horsefly buzzing
in the corner of my eye.
I lying back in the grass
felt sun shining on my belly.
All alone—
daisy, fly, grass and I.

I began to wonder what it would be like
to think a small heart beat
where I felt that sun so hot.
Ah, but be quiet, be quiet.
I know we can't have that.

Apology for Seclusion

You probably think these rooms
make a tight dark place
I shut up to die in.

And if only I would come out,
barefoot into the tall sweet grass,
I would be fully woman again.
But I am looking at single things,
to understand entirety,
and all I said of oneness remains!

My rooms are full of light
I have not finished catching.
Color falls on canvas still.

I do what I must,
but thank you friend
for asking.

Donald W. Baker

The Metropolitan Area

The base camp of the expedition,
that white tent in the clearing. At night
we shivered in mists from the river. Things
shook the brush beyond the fire circle.

In daylight, snapshots:
here, old cables rusting into rock
seared by a couple of blasts;
there, a crushed rib cage under giant
ferns; bones around a broken axe.

The poet of the party had some luck:
that squirrel climbing a dead oak;
those sparrows; and he caught a cat.

Then we saw the woodcarver, squatting
near a den in the riverbank, making music.
He had whittled a willow whistle
and danced around the legless skeleton
of a child. We shot him.

Theories of Economics

My mother writes that it pricks her conscience
to find the social security checks in her mailbox.
She has discovered that she is not a socialist.

Neither am I.

But I have thumbed through a headful of junk
and come up with a couple of snapshots: one
of a tough, smiling, handsome Yankee, squatting
on a doorstep near the Chemin des Dames,
who left a considerable piece of his stomach
night-patrolling a no-man's trench at Soissons,
who dropped thirty years of a gentle mind
into the greasy gear-racks of a truck company,
who divided himself into five for two children
and three grandchildren who have moved west;
the other of a not beautiful but clean-eyed
stenographer who is walking on the sand
or the boardwalk at Brant Rock, who from 1941
to 1945 sat filing one after another at night
some one hundred and fifteen censored letters
from me, shuddering at heart, as I do now.

In His infinite justice may God damn all mouths
that spit statistics and slogans and have given
two gray people one bad, beautiful conscience.

R. R. Cuscaden

Chess

for Donn Moir

Life (to abort a phrase) is far from this.
Show me that man who moves serenely to death
And I'll show you a boob, no Pawn. Bishops,
On or off the board, are surely bereft
Of meaning—although I find their sliding tactics
Rather apt. Knights, of course, are passe:
What irony to fight a barfly for honor's
Sake! And Castles collapse before the tollway.

But the Queen? See (somehow) her wild
Antics and vast power as sex, and then
Analogy holds. And also the King. Where else
Are all our slow, tortuous and tired
Steps so mirrored? Where else such bungling, when
The rest of life captures with joy and ease?

The Minor Poet's Sunday Afternoon

for Marilyn

The back door swings slowly in and out.
(Surely the wind or spirits or dead poets.)
I do not make a move to secure it.
Who am I to tackle the darkness?

A woman I once married and twice left
And then found again and barely retrieved
Moves leisurely in and out of the room
Achieving small triumphs with broom and duster.

Children lift drawings for inspection.
Through cigar smoke I approve of everything.
Someone's latest volume lays open before me;
The darkened page sounds an unfamiliar ring.

I hear vague plans for the afternoon:
Zoos, parks, beaches, visits, drives—
There is nothing I have not attempted;
Nothing that seems likely to survive.

The leaves of far too many autumns
Clog the way we've all separately come.
No-one's allowed to turn aside or return.
Someone tells me it is almost four-o'clock.

I carefully grind the unlit butt to pieces;
The halls of Hell have niches for all of us.

Margery Wood

The Latin Luncheon Club

A PAPIER-MACHE WOLF stood on wobbly, molded feet in the center of the polished mahogany dining table, and was surrounded by low bowls of narcissus blossoms.

The wolf brought exclamations of surprise and wonder. Mrs. Carr leaned over the chair back and touched the painted gray head. "Isn't this clever? Katherine must have made it herself." Valerie Moehlman, president of the Latin Luncheon Club, asked, "What does it mean, do you suppose?", and then Katherine Shelling came through the swinging door from the kitchen with boat-shaped baskets of rolls and cried, "Do sit down, everybody."

"This is very original, Katherine."

"Oh, you like my wolf? We made two others for the other tables in there—" She gestured toward the living room where eight other members were seated around linen-covered bridge tables. Katherine rested her hand on a chair back. She was flushed from her hostess duties. "Betsy was making papier-mache puppets in second grade, and I got this idea for the club luncheon. It's the wolf of Romulus and Remus! Although I don't think it looks much like a wolf. I had a terrible time with the tail, and I decided the thing looked more like a dog when I got through—" She took a step toward the swinging door. "Do go ahead, everybody."

"Romulus and Remus, of course. How stupid of me," Valerie said.

Isabel Larson was attending her first meeting. She had

been elected by the required unanimous vote at the April luncheon. She looked down at her plate of food. Instead of the mound of chicken salad canopied by a lettuce leaf and the asparagus stalks ribboned with yellow sauce which was the fare on each of the other plates, Isabel had slivery carrot strips, a hard boiled egg split open, and a slice of tomato. She was too shy to question the difference, but Valerie noticed, and gave a little shriek. "Oh, wait a minute, Isabel. That's not yours!"

Between Valerie and Isabel at the table sat the oldest member of the club, a tiny figure with scanty black hair who raised her questioning eyes to Valerie. Although Octavia was partially deaf, she had heard the shriek.

The plates were exchanged, the austere, diabetic food was placed before Octavia, and then Valerie pointed at the plate, and yelled in the old woman's ear. "Now, you can eat. That's yours." To Isabel, she apologized, "I should have noticed when we sat down. I'm sorry." Fussily, she unfolded her napkin. "Good thing you didn't think it was your plate. We don't treat new members like that."

Octavia smiled and giggled, showing her discolored teeth. She turned her round head with its skull cap of inky black hair, gazing expectantly at the faces around her but no one else seemed to be as amused as she was, so she stopped smiling and picked up a carrot sliver as the other ladies picked up their forks.

Mrs. Carr, the banker's wife, said, "Doesn't this look delicious?" She was diverted by the basket of rolls being passed to her. "No, thank you," she sighed. "I'd love to, but I mustn't." She passed on the basket. "I've just heard of a new diet, an easy one to remember, for a change." She put down her fork. Dressed in a lavender wool suit with an embroidered blouse, she was a plump woman with a beautiful, motherly bosom and a fleshy face richly nourished with emollients. "This diet is quite simple. My sister's doctor in Louisville gave it to her. No white foods and everything else baked, broiled or boiled."

Mrs. Dunham split open a roll. "How's that? Baked, boiled and—?"

"Broiled! Just remember the three B's," Mrs. Carr told her. Indifferent to her food, Octavia had fastened her attention on Isabel Larson who was sitting next to her. Presently, she plucked at Valerie's blouse sleeve. "Who's that?" she asked, nodding at Isabel.

Valerie softly apologized to Isabel. "She's forgotten." Then she yelled into Octavia's ear. "Mrs. Edward Larson, our new member. You know the Larsons."

Octavia stared at Isabel. Her eyes were sunken pools, purplish-black in the sallow face. Her crooked, joyful smile returned. She bobbed her head. "Your mother-in-law used to belong to the Club," she informed Isabel who said, "I know," and colored prettily.

"We're glad to have you," Octavia said.

"Let me cut your tomato for you." Valerie tried to draw away the old woman's attention.

Octavia's grating voice continued, "So you're little Edward's wife? The Larson's moved to the Hill in 1910."

"Eat your tomato," yelled Valerie.

"You're so kind to her," Mrs. Dunham commented.

Valerie shrugged and said that she felt sorry for her.

"It's too bad. She was a brilliant woman in her day," murmured Mrs. Carr as she lifted her water glass. "She used to give the finest papers at our meetings. She'd spend weeks preparing them. She really believed in studying, poor thing."

Mrs. Dunham explained to Isabel, "Octavia's mother founded our Club. She was a Latin teacher, and she decided that the ladies living on the Hill should have a study club. So she started the Latin Luncheon Club and the ladies did papers on Roman history."

"I nearly didn't bring her today," Valerie said in a quiet voice. "To tell the truth, I forgot about her. I've had a hectic week. But it's surprising how well she remembers things. She came over to my house this morning and asked me if I would take her to the luncheon."

Octavia, who had eaten one piece of tomato and half the boiled egg, now sat back in her chair and beamed around the faces at the table, nodding with pleasure at everyone. Valerie

shouted, "We're talking about your mother." This brought a shattering smile and Octavia edged toward Isabel. "Mama founded the Club so that the ladies on the Hill could study Latin literature and history."

"That's what I thought," Mrs. Dunham pursed her lips.

Olga Wheeler, wife of the local osteopath, sat at the end of the table. "No wonder she is skin and bones. She doesn't eat anything," she said coarsely.

"We study about different countries around the world now," Mrs. Dunham told Isabel. "This year we're doing Sweden. Last year we did Japan."

Olga Wheeler turned sideways in her chair and crossed her legs. "I was so mad at myself last night," she began in a nasal, strident voice. "I had dinner at the Inn and I bought a box of those bourbon-flavored chocolates."

"Aren't they good?" Isabel said. "I love them."

"Oh yes, they're good. Delicious, in fact." Olga brandished a hand with bright, pointed nails and brilliant diamond rings. "Two I'll have before I go to bed, I promised myself." She made a wide v with two fingers. "Just two, I said. Bill was at that convention in Cleveland, you know. He gets home tonight. Well, anyway, I was sitting there all alone in the house, reading the Reader's Digest until it was nearly eleven, and do you know—" She thrust out her chin and narrowed her eyes, "I popped one after another of those chocolates into my mouth and by the time I went to bed I had eaten the *whole top layer!*" She smacked her leg. "I was so mad at myself!"

There was a soft-broomed brush of silence around the table. Then Mrs. Carr spoke. "Well, I often think I can understand an alcoholic." She added quickly, "I mean, I can understand how it is with alcoholics if they have to fight drink the way I have to fight my desire to eat too much. John and I both love rich desserts. When I go to town, I have to cross the street to avoid the bakery window. John and I are so fond of those fiesta coffee cakes."

Mrs. Dunham had a stern, challenging manner. "What I have to fight," she declared, "are peanuts!"

Everyone, except Octavia, looked at her. Isabel laughed gently. "Yes, peanuts," Mrs. Dunham was firm. "I just can't stop eating them. So I don't dare buy any."

Valerie lit a cigarette. "I know what you mean. Potato chips are the same way."

The hostess began to clear the table. "It was delicious, Katherine." Mrs. Carr turned her head as the empty plate was lifted past her. "I liked that sauce on the asparagus."

Olga Wheeler spoke. "Was it the slow kind or the quick kind? Sort of a hollandaise, wasn't it?"

"It's a trick," Katherine said as she held the wide tray in her hands. "An egg—"

"Raw or cooked?" asked Mrs. Dunham.

"You beat it with lemon juice." Katherine headed for the swinging door. "I'll give you the recipe if you like."

Octavia laced together her mottled, bony fingers on the empty tablecloth before her. "The iris won't bloom," she announced.

"What?" questioned Mrs. Carr, looking at Valerie.

"I'll explain," Valerie waved her cigarette. "It really is terrible for her. Her garden is such a pleasure to her, poor soul."

Octavia directed her black, mirroring eyes around the table. "The iris won't bloom this year," she repeated.

Valerie frowned. "I'm telling them about it," she shouted.

Octavia nodded delightedly.

"It happened last Sunday right after church. Octavia came to my back door and asked me to come see her garden. So I went over, and I saw the damage. Some boys, and I think I know which ones, had gone through that garden and pinched off every bud. Well, almost every bud, all they could see, at least. The iris, the peonies, and some late red tulips."

"What a crying shame," said Mrs. Dunham who raised African violets.

"Yes, isn't it? They did leave the roses. I suppose because they didn't want to stick themselves."

"In my opinion, kids get away with murder nowadays," Olga Wheeler said.

"Isn't it the truth?" murmured Mrs. Carr.

Katherine Shelling was placing crystal glasses filled with raspberry sherbet at each place.

"There are very few calories in sherbet," Mrs. Carr said as she looked down into the sherbet glass. "John and I have it frequently. It satisfies our sweet tooth."

"How about Octavia?" asked Katherine, pausing at the swinging door.

Valerie leaned over and shouted, "Can you have sherbet?"

Octavia shook her head. "I don't like it." Then, turning her head rapidly around the table, she asked, "Will we have the program soon?"

"In a few minutes," Valerie yelled.

"You have the patience of Job." Mrs. Dunham complimented Valerie.

Olga Wheeler muttered, "She can't hear the papers when they are given, so what's her hurry?"

Katherine reappeared from the kitchen with a paring knife in her hand. She said, "Excuse me" to Mrs. Carr and leaned over the table, pressing the point of the knife on the top of the crinkly painted papier-mache wolf. The hardened paper broke open, and out tumbled a pile of white cards.

"Favors! Oh, Katherine, what a darling idea!" cried Valerie.

Each of the white cards had a butterfly pin fastened on it. Katherine passed them around. "They're hand-made," she said, "from Austria."

Valerie pinned a pale pink butterfly on to Octavia's loose, black bodice, saying, "They're very delicate. Excellent taste, Katherine."

Octavia wiggled in her seat. "What's it for?"

"Favors," shouted Katherine.

"Why?" asked Octavia, gravely examining the gossamer wings.

"Oh, honestly, she never understands," grumbled Olga Wheeler.

"Thank you so much," Isabel called as Katherine Shelling left the room.

"Yes, they are so pretty," Mrs. Carr added. Then, she turned to Olga. "Don't you give the program today?"

"Yes, and I've asked Valerie to let me go first because I have to leave early."

Mrs. Dunham was speaking to Isabel. "We do very well with our papers, I think. Next fall you'll have to give one. Everyone is required to be on the program sometime during the year. I always learn something at our meetings."

Isabel set down her coffee cup. She was younger than the others, and a little flustered. "I'll be scared when it's my turn," she said.

"Oh," Mrs. Dunham waved her hand, "we're not really deep, or anything like that. But it keeps a person from getting too rusty."

"I haven't given a paper since I left Junior College," Isabel told her.

"Octavia has gotten too old to do a regular subject, so she does the prayer for us," Mrs. Dunham explained. "Anyway, she never has approved of our studying other countries. She felt that we were changing the tradition of the Club. Her mother's interest in the classics, you know. But we couldn't go on reading papers on Latin subjects. We'd soon have had no members."

"I'd never have joined," Olga interrupted loudly.

Isabel fluttered her hand toward her coffee cup. "I thought there was sort of prestige, honor to belonging."

"Oh, there is!" Mrs. Dunham assured her. "No one is accepted except by unanimous vote."

"And you have to live on the Hill, of course," Mrs. Carr said.

"Isn't it time to begin?" Octavia said querulously to Valerie.

"I'm ready." Olga Wheeler put both hands on the table and stood up. She was a tall woman with angular, twitching shoulders and well-corseted hips which she emphasized by running her hands down the sides of the straight skirt.

While the tables in the living room were being cleared and

taken up, Octavia stood by herself at the front windows, looking out. She was a solitary, dwarfed figure in her loose, bronzed-crepe dress with the thick stockings rumped on the spindly legs. She stared out, mumbling to herself until Valerie came up and said, "We're ready for the prayer now."

With her breakingly joyful smile, Octavia put her hand on Valerie's sleeve. "Where do you want me to stand?"

"In front of the fireplace." Valerie pulled away. Octavia toddled across the room, took up her position with a formal posture: her hands linked on the baggy skirt, her face tense and waiting. The ladies were seated around the large living room. Three of the members on the striped brocade sofa opposite to the fireplace were chatting busily until Valerie called, "We'll have the prayer now." Katherine Shelling was skimming about, placing fresh ashtrays on the end tables. "Excuse me," she murmured, and sank into an armchair and bowed her head.

"God, Our Father," Octavia began. The dark pigmented eyelids came down over her eyes. Her sunken cheeks vibrated with the effort of speech. "bless us this day. May our Club and its members learn in the light of Almighty Knowledge, may we take our lessons to heart," her voice was hoarse and monotonous. She had memorized the prayer. "May we rejoice in the past and turn our faces to Thee for guidance." She paused, swallowing. There was silence. Then, several indistinguishable sounds ran from her pale lips. Several ladies moved uneasily in their places. But Octavia stayed motionless, blind with the effort of remembering. She had lost her place. Suddenly, with relief, she took breath and began again, raising her voice. "Remember, dear Lord, any of our members who are ill or grieved, comfort them in their distress and for us all, guide us in everlasting love, for Jesus' sake, Amen."

The shadowed lids flew up. Octavia nodded to one and all, her head trembling with effort. She looked around for a place to sit down, and with a grateful smile, eased on to a straight chair and docilely folded her hands on her lap.

Valerie's clear, young voice introduced Olga Wheeler.

"We'll have our business meeting after Olga's talk," she concluded.

Olga Wheeler strode to the fireplace and faced the ladies. She held three by five index cards in her hand. "First," she said, "I want to say that this was a very interesting subject to read on. Mrs. Hastings at the Library had several good books on Sweden and its foods." She rested her weight uneasily on one high-heeled foot, and pushed up a bracelet on her arm. "I think that Swedish food sounds both delicious and awful, but you can judge for yourselves. Now then—"

She peered at the card, holding it at arm's length, and ruefully interjected that she had forgotten her glasses. "The Swedish people are noted for their smorgasbord," she read. "The word means 'spread bread', and a smorgasbord includes fish dishes, cheeses and so forth. But it is only the appetizer in Sweden. They have what they call 'middag' which is served in the late afternoon. Herring salad, smoked eel, smoked reindeer precede the meal. Then comes beefsteak and potatoes, or meatballs and macaroni. The country people have breast of crows braised with onions. Finally, they finish with rich pastries and coffee."

Mrs. Dunham murmured disapprovingly. She was sitting erectly in an easy chair with her orthopedic shoes placed squarely on the carpet. Mrs. Carr looked at her and nodded in agreement.

"I haven't begun to describe some of the really odd dishes," continued Olga in her nasal voice. "For instance, on Marten's Day which is November 10th, they have a soup made from goose stock, goose blood, wine and brandy. This soup is eaten with goose-liver sausage and apples and prunes. When the soup and its accompaniments are finished, they bring in a *roast goose* with apples and plums."

Katherine Shelling laughingly cried out, "Oh no!", but immediately composed herself.

"Many factors influence the foods of Sweden: the lack of refrigeration, the short summer season, and the bitter cold. These factors have given rise to a hearty, filling national diet. Sauces are rich in butter, cream and meat fats. Desserts

are covered with whipped cream, sugar and almonds. Swedish desserts are masterpieces of pastry."

She looked up. "I did read a funny story about that. Some king of Sweden a long time ago ate so many of their buns, the ones made with almond paste and smothered in whipped cream, he ate so many of these that his digestive system burst and he died."

Olga ran her finger across her eyebrow and shifted her weight to the other foot. "To continue," she said. "The holiday fare is very interesting. The Swedish housewife spends weeks preparing the food. For instance, the main dish is the—" Olga paused, shaking her head, "the 'lut-fish'. I don't know how to pronounce it. Anyway, this is cod soaked for three weeks in a brine made from lime and wood ashes, then soaked again to remove the salt. By this time, as one book put it, it is as soft and squishy as fish eggs and has a taste that cannot be described."

She turned the index card of notes. "In conclusion, it may be said that the foods of Sweden are unusual and a result of many factors. The best of these foods we enjoy in America today." She looked at her watch, and added in a conversational tone, "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to run. Thanks for letting me go first, Valerie."

Valerie rose. "That was an excellent report, Olga. We'll all know what to expect if we go to Sweden, won't we?"

"All that *goose*!" Katherine Shelling burst out. "Can you imagine it? Goose soup, goose livers and roast goose!"

Octavia had heard snatches of the report. She twisted in her chair toward Isabel. "The Romans had great banquets. They lay on couches and drank from gold and silver goblets."

Isabel laughed nervously and said that she had heard they did.

Valerie's voice brought the room to quiet again. The minutes were read and approved. The treasurer, Mrs. Dunham, reported sixty two dollars and fifteen cents in the bank account.

Octavia said to Isabel, "That was in the time of the Emperors, of course." The skull cap of black hair raised swiftly

when Mrs. Dunham reprimanded her. "Shh! Octavia!" The old woman laid the tips of her cold, attenuated fingers on Isabel's wrist. "I'll tell you about Nero later," she whispered.

Valerie then officially welcomed Isabel Larson as a new member. All the faces turned to Isabel and she blushed and looked down at her lap. "Our one item of business today," Valerie announced, "is the election of another new member. The membership committee has submitted the name of Mrs. Franks. Most of you have met her, I think. They've been in town about six months." She paused for confirmation and several ladies nodded. "The membership committee recommends our approval." She then asked the secretary to distribute the slips of paper for voting. "Is there any discussion?" she asked. She rested her knee on the cushion of a deep-seated easy chair.

"Mrs. Franks sings, doesn't she?" asked Mrs. Dunham.

Katherine Shelling answered, "Yes, she sang a solo at the Presbyterian Church last Sunday, as a matter of fact."

"Lovely woman," someone said from a corner.

Valerie held lead pencils in her fist. "Who needs a pencil?" She circulated about the room. Mrs. Dunham held up an Eversharp she had taken from her purse. Valerie paused by Octavia's chair. "Write yes," she shouted, "on this paper."

The slip of white paper rested in the old woman's lap. She lifted her triangular-shaped face and her dark eyes were anxious. "Why?"

Valerie shouted, "We're choosing a new member, a Mrs. Franks. Just write yes. It's alright." She started away, collecting slips of paper from those who had finished writing. Octavia scooted toward Isabel. "Do you know her? Who is it?"

Isabel murmured, "Mrs. Franks." She hadn't the temerity to speak more loudly. Mrs. Dunham called, "Mrs. *Franks*, Octavia."

Octavia shook her head decisively. "I don't know her."

"They live in the old Remington property," explained Mrs. Carr.

But Octavia continued to shake her head from side to side. "The Gustins live there now," she finally said.

All the slips had been collected except Octavia's. Valerie was agitated. Her forehead had pink splotches on it. She drew up a chair beside Octavia. "Listen," she began, "we have to have your vote. Please write yes, Octavia, so we can conclude our business."

A few of the ladies began to converse in low tones, but most of them sat watching Valerie with serious expressions on their faces.

"Last month you voted for Isabel Larson, remember?"

Octavia beamed at Isabel. "I knew the Larson family. I don't know this other name."

Valerie continued patiently, sitting sideways on the chair, and leaning close to the tiny figure. "Mrs. Franks and her husband bought the Gustin property. Now write yes, please, Octavia."

The nest of wrinkles at her throat quivered as Octavia spoke to all the ladies around the room. A fascinated hush had settled over the group. "I never voted for any family I didn't know," Octavia said.

Valerie picked up the slip of paper which had fallen on the floor. "Here—" she said, and handed Octavia the pencil again. Octavia bent double, writing shakily on her knee. When Valerie took the slip from her, she looked at it, and then dramatically raised her eyes to the ceiling. "She's written no," she told the group.

Mrs. Dunham's low, authoritative voice was heard. "Let it go, Valerie. We all understand."

Valerie thrust out her hand helplessly. "It's supposed to be unanimous."

"Not necessarily," Mrs. Dunham said with pointed emphasis, "under these circumstances."

"Well, allright," Valerie sighed. "Will the membership committee please inform Mrs. Franks that she has been accepted? The meeting is adjourned."

There was a general rising. Mrs. Carr started to leave the

room, calling out that she wanted the recipe for the asparagus sauce. "When you have time, Katherine."

"It was a delicious luncheon."

"The report on Sweden's foods was very interesting, wasn't it?"

"All that goose!" laughed Katherine. "I can't get over it. Imagine!"

"They have the best smorgasbord at King's Restaurant on Sundays."

Mrs. Carr had been to the bedroom, and now returned with a mink stole about her heavy shoulders. "You're all coming to my house next month," she called.

"Who has the paper for next time?"

Katherine Shelling said that she was doing the Laplanders.

The chorus of conversation rose, and some of the ladies began to go out the open front door. Octavia was still sitting with her hands folded in her lap as though the meeting had not ended.

Valerie had drawn Mrs. Dunham to a far part of the room. "I didn't know what to do," she said. "It was just awful."

"You did the best you could. You were very patient."

"But it's not right," fretted Valerie. "She forgot the prayer, too. Oh, she finally finished, but for a minute, I was so embarrassed, weren't you?"

Mrs. Dunham spoke sternly. "There's only one thing to do, Valerie. You'll have to quit bringing her."

"Oh, I couldn't do that. She likes to come, you know how it is."

"With the new people we have coming into the club, and some of them people who don't know about her, well, they might think we're queer to have her around. Have you thought about that?"

Valerie stamped her foot. "Honestly, it's a mess, isn't it? I don't know what to do."

Octavia had risen from her seat. She hesitated, looked about uncertainly, and then toddled over to Valerie. Mrs. Dunham moved away. "Is it time to go home?" Octavia

asked. Then, she began to chatter as Valerie walked across the room. "I didn't know Mrs. Franks. The Gustins live in that property, I thought. I don't think we should have anyone in the Club that we don't all know."

Valerie shouted over her shoulder, "Never mind!" and then hurried on, catching up to Mrs. Dunham. "I guess you're right," she said, looking out the open door to the street and speaking in a conspiratorial tone. "I'll have to think of some excuse next time not to bring her."

Mrs. Dunham drew on her gloves. "It will make things easier for you, Valerie. You've been too good, I think. And, mark my words, she'll never know the difference."

Octavia found Isabel Larson standing with her coat over her arm, waiting to say goodbye to Katherine Shelling. Octavia grabbed her sleeve. "I have a paper at home on Roman banquets. Would you like to read it?"

Isabel stepped back skittishly, bumping into Mrs. Dunham. "Oh, excuse me," she cried.

Octavia's hoarse voice pursued Isabel. "Nero served nightingale's tongues and brains of peacocks," she said triumphantly. "I'll let you read about it."

Her glance flickering into the dark, eager eyes, and then over her head, Isabel replied, "That's nice," and extended her hand to Katherine Shelling. "Thank you so much, Mrs. Shelling. It has been a lovely luncheon."

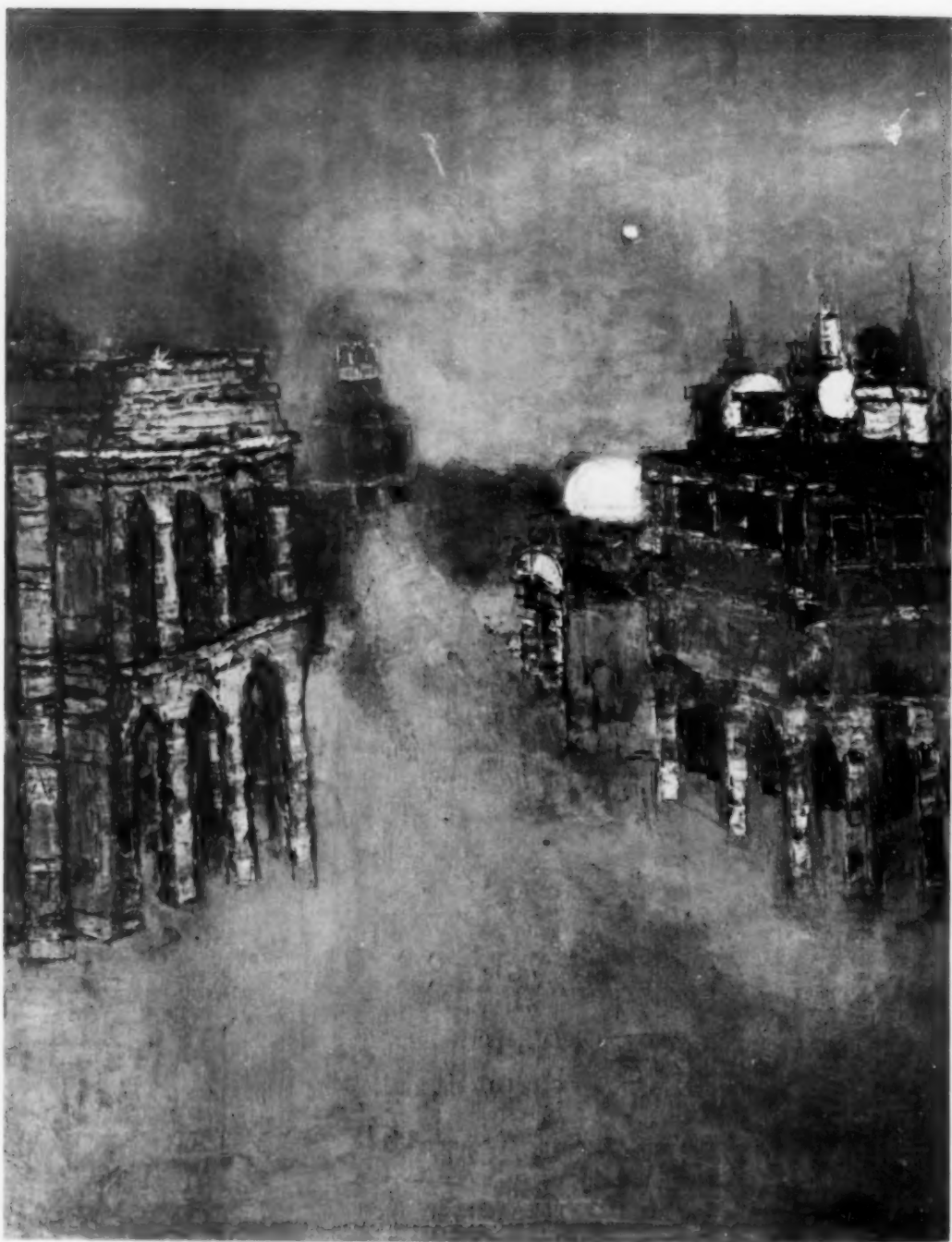
Maxwell Gordon

THE EIGHT OILS reproduced here are a characteristic selection from Maxwell Gordon's most recent one man show with the ACA Gallery, in 1959. Since Mr. Gordon's first one man show in the Pinacotheca Gallery in 1943, he has had four others, in 1948, 1950, 1953, and 1959, with the ACA Gallery which represents him. He has also exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, the Corcoran Gallery, the National Academy, the Pennsylvania Academy, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Baltimore Museum, the Seattle Museum, and in most major exhibitions throughout the country. Born in Chicago and raised in Cleveland, Ohio where he has studied at the Cleveland School of Art and John Hunt Polytechnic, Mr. Gordon has settled in New York to paint and work.

*Represented by: ACA Gallery
63 East 57 Street
New York, N. Y.*



Wisp



Grey Village



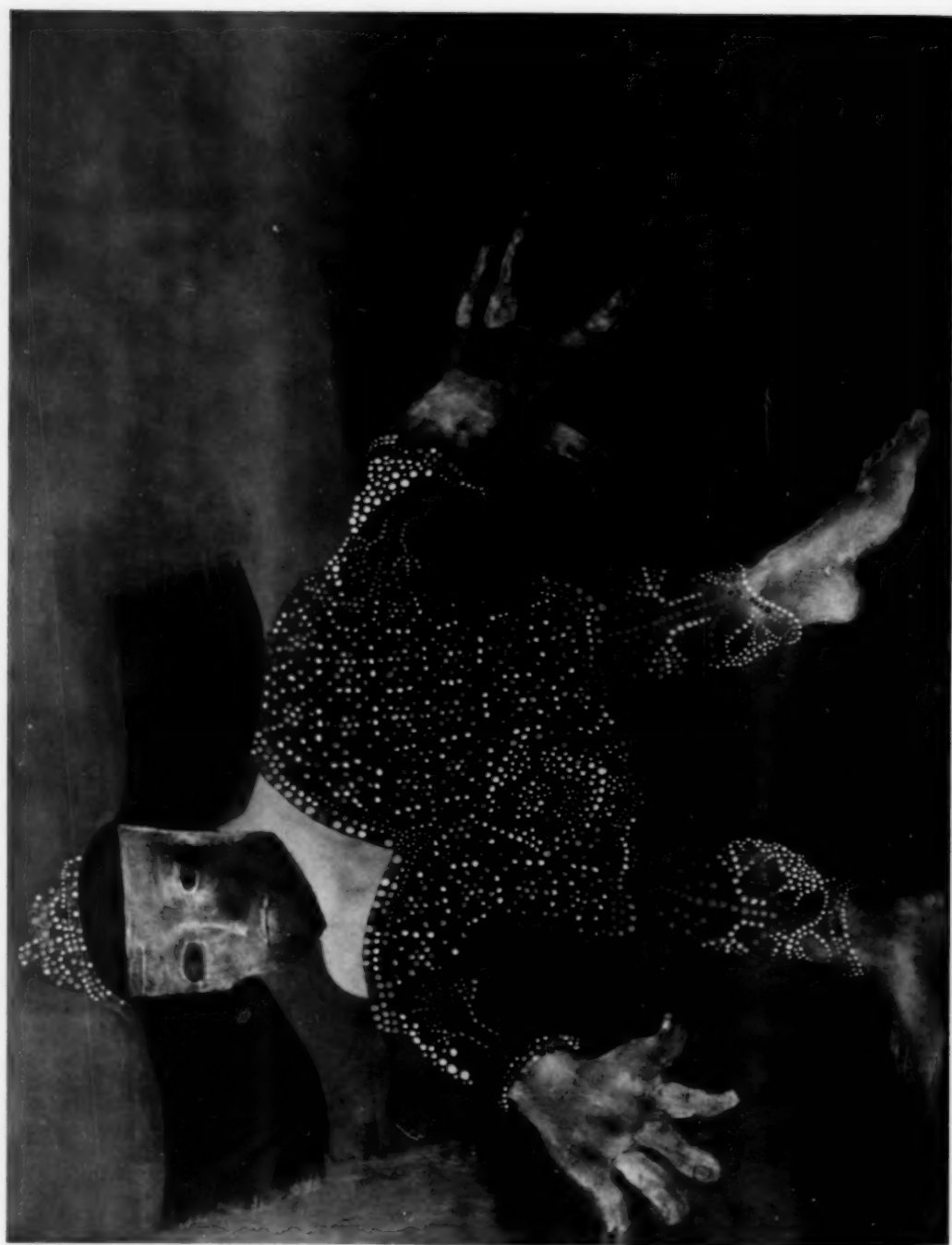
Wounded Angel



Maxwell Gordon



Saturday



Clown





River Rest

I. R.: the Opiate of the Elite

FIFTY YEARS ago it would have been difficult to name in a phrase the unique quality or principle of American intellectual life—there was still too much Europe (subjects, disciplines, scholarship, learning) left in the thinking mind. Nowadays, though, the peculiar national note sounds louder, and the problem is easier to solve. Where but in America, after all, is last week's Marxist this week's analysand and next week's hipster or priest? Where but in America is the life of a word one season?* Where but in America do the national heroes of yesteryear—Huck and Jim, Ishmael and Queequeg—become (at an interesting critic's awakening) mere male lovers caught in the act? Where but in America is the thinking man's favorite reading a volume of paperback philosophy that "shows him" how Aquinas and Hegel (or Plato and Pepys or Darwin and Hakluyt or Melville and Mighty Mouse) are one? The ground of this taste and behavior, the center from which the new illumination flows, is the principle

*Who can remember when a *square* was a figure and a *sick comedian* was an ill man? Who can recognize the *Model T* now that it is called a *Classic Car*? Was there not a time—hardly a wink ago, it seems—when *vodka* meant drunken, rough-bearded commissars, not *chic* Martinis? a time when *Spring* was not a cigarette, when the *summit* was not a conference, when *sitting* was not a job—a time when *Beats* could be counted and *Hips* reduced, when a *package* was something you carried instead of negotiated with Paramount and Bennett Cerf? There was, there was, but we shall not see its like again.

of *Instant Redefinition*, an item which when properly identified and celebrated may well rank at the level of the twin-burger and sidecar among major American contributions to culture.

Highbrows are not of course the only people aware of or responsible for this contribution. A nod must go to the common semanticist, that bird of no especially elegant feather who long ago began amusing himself with paradoxes of functional name-changing (If I enter the room by the window, the window "is" a door; if I look through the door to see what is in the room, the door "is" a window), and thereby helped to lay the shifty foundation for IR. And an award of some sort is also due those political and commercial giants who, by playing the game of Redefinition tirelessly over the years, have done much to create an audience capable of recognizing achievement in the field. It was an amateur name-changer from Wisconsin, a character who had never heard of Korzybski, who (ages ago) first managed to enchant the nation with the trick of spinning terms: I have 350 *Communists*, 175 *sympathizers*, 35 *partyliners*. . . . And by the same token it is the unsung adman who, whether working with ordinary domestic redefinitions (Surf equals soap, Crest equals Health), or on projects of international reverberation (Puerto Rico equals money), has functioned as the indispensable link between the superb verbal agility of the Elite and homely inarticulateness of the Mob. Nor should it be forgotten, in any serious effort to apportion credit, that some of the most daring ventures in IR have come (astonishingly) from stodgy enterprises like banks and investment houses. Hayden, Stone Co. for example burst forth this year with a market letter that quoted a text of Micah ("What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?") and subsequently redefined it as "this bullish psychology." Shields and Company, in the days of the gifted and famous Mr. Walter Gutman, produced classic work in the genre, notably this stunning redefinition of the modern artist as a *growth stock*:

. . . people with money are speculating in art like (sic) they do

in stocks . . . If you want to make money there's a great group of only partially recognized talent to choose from, here are some of the names — Forst, Leslie, Segal, Grillo, Wolf-Kahn, Frank, Katz, McElroy — the Museum of Modern Art is showing work of 16 younger artists — there's money in art, I know from experience. You can become a Friend of the Whitney Museum if you want to along with Armand Erpf of Loeb, Rhoades & Co., and Joseph Hirshhorn of uranium riches, Roy Neuberger and Howard Lipman who somehow or other get there first and most quietly each year with one of the most spectacular stocks — this year it was Universal Match — they were in long before the people I know told me about it.

This commendable IR activity on the fringes of intellectual life should not, however, be allowed to obscure the truth that the original achievements in the line were uniquely the product of the Elite—founding fathers whose gifts enabled them to see Lewis Carroll as Kafka, St. Augustine as Sorel, years before anyone dreamt of a market for such insights. And happily (as any evening's random reading testifies) the Elite continues to be responsible for the most strikingly ingenious applications in the field. While clods, authorities, and experts even at this date deal dully and seriously with the question whether the Guggenheim Museum of Frank Lloyd Wright is an honorable, useful, or adequate *museum*, IR apprentices writing in art journals and gallery catalogues shuck off all that boredom by renaming the place completely. (Soaring above the brutally exigent fact that the object discussed is a building in which nothing but pictures and fire extinguishers are hung, one critic declares that Wright's Museum "is" a Dadaist Funhouse: argument over, redefinition complete.) Or again: while dryasdust scholars and statisticians pore over census figures and eye-wearying tables from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, laboring to buttress tiresome answers to tiresome questions about the nature of recent shifts in what is called the "pyramid of society," a free-spirited IR man leaps forward to quicker and more amusing questions. Why say *pyramid* at all? why not a new name?—bulb? hourglass? fishing bob? Addressing himself to the matter in an analytical *Horizon* article called "The Future American Class System" (illustrated in analytical red, white and blue), Mr. Stim-

son Bullitt writes: "the shape of society . . . will resemble not an hourglass but a fishing bob, or a pair of coolie hats laid brim to brim with a spike projecting from the apex of each. More of the people will be clustered near the equator which divides the two classes. However, the spread between the two extremes of talent—the spikes at top and bottom—will be greater than in the past." Old pyramid becomes new bob and the reader escapes with not a single statistic jangling his brain.

As these examples indicate, part of the fascination which masters of IR undoubtedly will exercise over future historians stems from their lightfootedness, their nearly divine power of leaping with perfect poise from summit to summit, avoiding the pathetic grubbing after facts or documents or truth which so often gravels the readers of learned men, and yet invariably achieving a triumphant transformation of whatever their winged labels touch. The pedant is miserably passive; he cannot sweep aside the mouldering heaps of biographical information that assure him that such a figure as, say, Dostoevski, was a tormented soul throughout his life—a neurotic, an alienated mind. But the nimble IR racer, rapid and active, travels under lighter burdens of knowledge. He can say, as Professor Sidney Hook says in his recent *Political Power and Personal Freedom*, that "under the Czarist regime Dostoevski in his most fruitful years was a conformist." What is more, the IR-ist can move quite as swiftly in reverse. What is Richard Nixon? asks Mr. Norman Mailer in his *Advertisements for Myself*, and answers: a hipster, like Thelonius Monk and Heidegger. Who is Freud? asks Mr. Erick Fromm in his book about that thinker, and answers: a "very insecure" type.

To be sure, the IRist does much more than protect the thrill-seeking reader against sluggish information and odious truth. In the recent past, indeed, there have been occasions when nothing but his gift stood between the public and misconceptions that could have done appalling damage to the nation's key institutions. Not long ago, for example, evidence was put in circulation that told heavily against the reputa-

tions of several eastern universities. Editors throughout the country were in receipt of well-authenticated reports indicating that some of America's unknown middle-western institutions of learning, colleges of no reclamation whatever (Kalamazoo, for one), were having extraordinary success in producing serious intellectuals and scientists—a greater success (proportionally) than that of Harvard and Yale. What could such news mean except that these long-chuckled-at schools, objects of mockery and condescension, stood for purposefulness of teaching, intensity of thought, unduplicated in the institutions known to be The Best? Plainly the national interest demanded that Americans believe that their greatest institutions are large, exclusive, and famous: was it not likely that uncertainty about the preeminence of Yale and Harvard would lead directly to uncertainty about Cadillacs or even about Time, Inc.? A brilliant IR agent, Mr. David Riesman, asked himself this question and thereafter threw himself manfully into the breach, managing in one superlative paragraph to crush the enemy by redefining successful education as Boobism:

... many of the leading and most distinguished universities (Harvard, Yale, and Princeton for example) have turned out relatively few scientists in proportion to their graduates, whereas a number of small and often impoverished liberal arts colleges, primarily in the middle West, have turned out, in proportion to their enrollments, a great many ... In other words, the very lack of cosmopolitanism of some of these colleges (especially perhaps in the middle West), and the lack of cosmopolitanism of the students who ... went there, meant that a teacher of even moderate quality and interest in his students could accumulate disciples quite readily. Conversely, the inferior record of the great cosmopolitan universities in recruiting undergraduates into academic careers has in my judgment been partly due to the fact that students who went there have had many other choices in mind. (Likewise their social science professors, busy with graduate students, with consultancies, and with all the opportunities and temptations of a metropolis, have also had other alternatives to looking for disciples among their undergraduate students.) That is, such students have found other ways to spend their time, even other intellectual ways, than in the laboratory or in the office of the favorite professor. They could envisage themselves (assuming they eschewed business) becoming diplomats, journalists, or TV script-writers, along with a thousand other oppor-

tunities offered by the big city. ("The College Professor," in *Education in the Age of Science*, ed. Brand Blandshard, 1959.)

Had it not been for Mr. Riesman, the public might have persisted in the delusion that a man devoted to teaching is not a neurotic "looking for disciples" among undergraduates, and could even have convinced itself that only sociologists regard earnest and capable teaching as a product of naivete and narrowness.

True, opportunities for service of this sort do not occur daily: the life of an IR agent is not lived at a continuous pitch of vibrant selflessness. Still, these men have saved more than the reputation of Harvard. More than once a writer who has felt that *his* reputation was being encroached upon by mere imitators has shrewdly reconstituted himself as an IR man simply to set the record straight. Thus, when William Faulkner was asked (by the English Club at the University of Virginia) to say a word about Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, he answered as follows:

His (Salinger's) story was an intelligent, very sensitive young man who was — (in) this day and time — an anachronism, was almost an obsolescence, trying to cope with a struggle with the present day world which he was not fitted for, when he didn't want money, he didn't want position, anything, he just wanted to find man and wanted something to love, and he couldn't. There was nothing there. The nearest he came to it was his sister who was a child and though she tried to love him she couldn't understand his problem. The only other human beings he ran into he had preconceptions to doubt . . . (Faulkner in the University, ed. F. L. Gwynn and J. L. Blotner, 1959.)

Sentences like these neatly redefine Holden Caulfield as Quentin Compson of *The Sound and the Fury*, and clarify the important question of precedence. And beyond such minor rescues, there have been moments when, owing to nothing more than a single judicious application of IR, whole art forms that have suffered neglect or even opprobrium have been restored to their proper significance. A season or so ago Random House brought out an unpretentious-looking, gaily-jacketed volume of Mr. Stephen Becker about the history of funnies and cartoons—an item called *Comic Art in America*

that was richly illustrated with old strips, cartoons, and big print. Suspecting no IR trap, one picked up the book prepared for a nostalgic evocation of the Sunday afternoons of youth—and was stunned to read:

The drawing style is more complex than we might think at first glance, seeing the free use of white space, straight lines and patches of black. The backgrounds are not complicated, but they contribute to the sense of reality . . . His line was already clean and sure; his backgrounds were open and uncluttered . . . The facial expressions were beautifully simple . . .

What are these sentences about? Why, about *Jiggs* and *Smit-ty*! Ugliness redefined as art, a technical appreciation of *kitsch*, a recovery comparable to Lascaux! Although (as is the case with many works of IR) skimming sentences in Mr. Becker's book is like trying to stand up on a turntable, it should be said that the moment at which assurances vanish in *Comic Art in America*, the moment of redefinition when *Skippy* and *Tillie* become *draftsmanship*, is a shade more moving (literally) than a page of the usual IR paperback claiming that Freud's other name is Marx. For while the latter names are often no more than mere counters, Jiggs and Lester De Pester have genuine reverberations: in altering his relationship to them the average reader alters a whole landscape of mind.

By studying this or any other IR alteration—funnies as art, painting as growth stock, Nixon as hipster—a researcher could doubtless arrive at a model of the new-style thinking mind. But since it is improbable that such a project is yet under way, the present moment has to be thought of simply as another time of transition, a period just preceding the formalization of an exciting new conceptual scheme in psychology. This is not to say that the transition will be absolutely smooth: a current of opposition to IR does flow. As might be expected (what intellectual advance was ever easily accomplished?), a few clerks and greybeards profess to regard the emergence of IR as a sign of failing cultural health. Some persist in claiming that a mark of a sophisticated or truly educated mind has always been disbelief that a mere

switch of labels, the mere shout of a magic word, can suffice to alter the essential nature of the object named. And there is, of course, a battered shard or two of evidence that supports this view. That a belief in word magic is characteristic of the childish mind is suggested by certain fantasies called *children's books* (The boy Roland, in Stephane Nelly's book of that name, says "Crack" and mink skins come to life, chalk animals burst off the blackboard). That certain superstitious inquirers of the dead past have inveighed against the idle shifting of labels can be demonstrated by the example of Sir Thomas Browne, who three centuries ago warned against those who "put . . . new names or notions upon Authentic Virtues and Vices." And as is well-known, one or two dour minds of the present age (Orwell, for instance) have urged that the so-called perversion of IR which issues in Great Redefinitions like War is Peace and Peace is War is nothing less than the key to the monstrosity of totalitarianism.

But what is missing from all antideluvian prejudice of this kind is (clearly) any deep historical sense, any truly sensitive awareness of the differences between former ages and our own. As already indicated, the grand record of intellectual history over the past thirty years amply establishes the advent of a period (our own) when men are able to persuade themselves that by attaching a new label to their cast of thought, replacing zeal with zen, they in fact make themselves new. Moreover, the present age has convictions about the very *nature* of ideas that are unique and that explain in themselves the gap between traditionalist standards and those of IR. In our age a valuable idea—a jazz bassoon, a recessed filter—dawns in the mind of a thinker who is styled an *Idea Man*; the latter talks the idea (also called a gimmick or *stick*) into his Dictet and a thousand mere technicians (idealess men) carry it out, while the Idea Man retires to invite his Muse again. In the classical model of the intellectual life the situation is different. A new idea is regarded as meaningless until documented, until its originator succeeds in relating it to an existent body of thought, in underpinning it with observation, in assessing it with an eye to-

ward revealing both its strengths and weaknesses. Or again, to mention only one more of a dozen major differences in modes of thought between this and earlier ages: in today's ad agency it is possible to have a name for a soap or a moon-shot before the soap exists—not one name (Fab, Zel) but a dozen, each of them a name without a referrent. But in the older world it was assumed that thoughtful men would have no dealings with words that stood for nothing: a new label (the indeterminancy principle, dementia praecox in remission, Joe Christmas) could be justified only if it were a name for a complicated series of experiments, emotional responses, imaginative probings and weighings of experience, only if it finally signified a genuine accretion of knowledge, imaginative, moral, or scientific. Looked at as a fossilic survival, the sense of intellection just described may possess certain attractions, may inspire a quiver of nostalgia—but to allow the fancy too much play here would be foolish. If the present age is one in which intellectual endeavor becomes increasingly a matter of “having an Idea” in the “new-name” sense, if the characteristic term of praise in this age is not “thorough,” or “complete,” or “solid,” but *Suggestive*, it does not follow that IR is the cause rather than the consequence of this development. Intelligent men who comprehend the direction of the future will in short strike no ostrich-like posture at this moment, but assume cheerfully that since former ages admit to having had nothing but a beast in view, it is not less than wise to welcome the new.

Whether the welcome will be enthusiastic anywhere on earth except here is perhaps a question. Certainly England has shown signs of resistance. The principle of snappy redefinition, the idea of altering a situation by the mere tossing-forth of a new epithet, continues to be regarded by English fogies young and old as a subject mainly for jokes. IR is never encountered as part of the armor of a young, passionate Englishman who regards himself (as Norman Mailer regards himself) as the heroic talent of the age; instead it appears only in the tiny handbooks of such humorists as Stephen Potter, who seem determined not to allow IR to become

more than another gamesman's ploy. But the strength of this resistance can be exaggerated: America is, after all, not quite alone. When account is taken both of its enormous cultural influence and of the voice of the political master of IR, the Soviet Free Thinker—that immensely forceful redefiner of such terms as Evolution and God—it seems improbable that foreign places will not willy-nilly enter the new dispensation soon. And for this reason, if for no other, it is interesting to speculate about the future of the label IR itself. At the moment it is still feasible to stand back, as it were, and view the initials as mere symptoms of the condition that they pretend to define—but ages hence the case will be otherwise: the IR factor will be the unifying principle of all culture, the blessed and blessing softener of the universal brain. There will be churches then, surely, perhaps even some IR saints. And the latter will be chosen (inevitably) from IR's first generation—today's highbrow Americans, those unique characters who already are everything by starts and nothing long, swervers from one vocabulary to another, name-changers, Real Shifty Guys, figures who have yet to say (and never will) "Teach me to stand still." A vision to excite every ambitious soul! For the light it casts on the activity of such souls (before the moment of their exaltation), and upon the Mental Age they represent, and hence upon the future of The Mind, the principle of IR deserves to be treated even now if not with adoration, then with (at the least) only an extremely *wary* contempt.

Reviews

Jean Malaquais

The Gangrene

The Gangrene, trans. Robert Silvers. New York: L. Stuart.
\$2.00

Reviewing or summing up a book like *The Gangrene* is not a routine matter. No plot, no suspense, no ideological or theoretical considerations guide the reader. Six Algerians — four of them students at the University of Paris — enumerate a series of identical tortures inflicted upon them by scores of Parisian detectives during ten days of constant "questioning." The expression "enumerate" is adequate, for rather than recounting his predicament each man describes with a frightening clinical detachment a set of beastly experiments performed on his very flesh. Any attempt at rewording the techniques employed — from methodically pounding one's liver to plugging electric wires up one's anus and urinating on the patient's face — would be a betrayal; any attempt at qualifying even in the most guarded terms the naked facts would be a rhetorical embezzlement. There is no substitute for the purposely flat, dispassionate voice of the tortured. Here eloquence is achieved at the price of monotony.

What could be more monotonous than torture? Whatever the refinements the result is always the same: burst spleen, broken teeth, shrieks silenced in vomit and blood. Monotonous also is the torturer's reward: political prisoners seldom squeal. And those who, in the act of spitting up their lungs, gurgle out a name, a hiding place, never know enough names or hiding places to pay off. True for the European underground movements during the last war, this is far more true for the Algerian uprising. The lesson of history is clear. No matter how busily the czarist Okhrana was decimating the ranks of the Narodnaia Volia, czars and their dignitaries were still blown up by home made bombs, and no matter how many American colonists were dangling from the gallows, the British were still beaten. Had Himmler's Gestapo, had Hitler's crematory ovens been ten times more "efficient," doom was on the Nazi millenium, not on the popular movements or the Jewish people. Just as police action never prevented a murder, pushing a bottle up a man's rectum never reversed the flow of time. Six years of "pacifying" Algeria with tanks, planes, napal bombs, flame throwers, scorched land, wholesale massacres, uprooting and dispersing over a million people, concentration camps, judicial frame-ups, summary executions, institutionalized torture, haven't brought France one step closer to solving a situation which, only a decade ago, a few con-

structive ideas could have prevented. The lesson of history is clear, but then the French are the last of the Western peoples to have learned any lesson at all.

Few are the foreigners who have an inkling of the routine, the provincialism, the bureaucratic rot which impregnate most of the French institutions. Though great strides have been made since the end of the war to modernize the French social framework in line with a truly remarkable economic reconversion — its first in the last eighty years — the civil servant still acts and reacts in the manner of a Courteline character. Righteous, arrogant, loud-voiced, a *fonctionnaire* will handle *eo ipso* the man across his desk as if he were his private enemy. There is something about him of the *petit blanc* who, suffering from piles, takes it out on the natives. In fact, with the exception of the working class, France is essentially a country of underpaid white-collar employees and retired bureaucrats, artisans and middlemen, small land holders and smaller shopkeepers. Although French key industries — steel, chemicals, electronics, petroleum, locomotives, cars — are among the most modern in the world,¹ although French department stores count clerks by the hundreds, there is one shop (*bistros* included) for every forty inhabitants, with the result that the average of salaried employees in the country's trade is slightly above one person per business. Thus most shops are owned and operated on a family basis. Rather than integrating themselves as workers in industry, where their cumulative and even individual earnings would easily top their present income, hundreds of thousands of people vegetate in an economic vacuum. Traditionally speaking, there is a live resistance to any type of initiative which might threaten to upset a deeply imbedded national idiosyncrasy: social stratification. As if they were sure to have conquered the peak of *haute cuisine* and the summit of *exquisite l'amour*, Monsieur and Madame Dupont seem to be equating the unchangeability of their habits with that of the Earth on its orbit. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, is the most French of the French sayings. Electricity notwithstanding, even torturing hasn't changed very much. In an age of pentothal, scientific brainwashing and Stalinist confessions, the French cops still work you over with fists to the belly and boots to the groin.

Like Henri Alleg's book, *The Question*, which recounts the author's ordeal in Algiers at the hands of paratroopers, both privates and officers, *The Gangrene* was seized by the French government the day after it was put on sale in bookstores. That the seizure of books is illegal and contrary to the Gaullist Constitution, not even the most extreme nationalists would deny. As the French editor of *The Gangrene* points out, no book "has been seized in this way in France in several decades." One must add, though, that confiscating newspapers and magazines is an old and respectable practice with French governments. In principle, no printed matter may be arbitrarily seized, since it constitutes a violation of the freedom of speech. But, where Algerian "rebels" are concerned, the guiding principle seems to be that it is unprincipled to fall back on principles. Officially, the only

¹With the end of the war, these industries were reconverted almost from scratch. In 1947, at the time of the Marshall Plan, the average age of the French industrial equipment (mining, textile, etc.) was 25 to 70 years, as against 2 to 6 years in the U.S.

"French" way to speak of torture is to proclaim it a fantasy born out of the perverted minds of the *fellagahs*. To be sure, those who drape themselves in the folds of the national flag, justify torturing the "Moslem assassins" in the name of la France, of anti-Communism, and even of Humanity. In the name of la France, because Algeria was, is and shall be French for ever and ever; in the name of anti-Communism, because if "we" move out "they" will move in; in the name of Humanity, because torturing one "rebel" may save the lives of a hundred innocent creatures — preferably children. But those are political morons, whose patriotic zeal rather upsets the government's policy. "Torture?" asks the government in the person of its Prime Minister. "Torture? What can that mean, pray?" In fact, concerning the seizure of *The Gangrene*, Monsieur Debre spoke of the book as being "libellous," "infamous," "outrageously defamatory," "a total fabrication," "a collection of lies," and last but not least, a tale "concocted by two writers paid by the Communist party." Once upon a time, when a noble heart was unlucky in gambling, or lived above his means, or lost his hair prematurely, the saying went: *Cherchez la femme*; nowadays, noble hearts being dead and buried, let governments blunder, or the cost of bread rise, or the rain fall out of season, and the saying is sure to be: *Cherchez le communiste*. Not that the Communists are incapable of concocting forged documents; they are quite remarkable craftsmen in the trade, though not so much as to monopolize the entire market. Yet, in this particular instance it so happens that crediting the Communists with the paternity of *The Gangrene* is about as sound as saying the devil sired rattlesnakes. "We shall prosecute the defamators!" thundered — approximately — the Prime Minister to the fervent applause of many a Senator who never felt the impact of a questioner's knee in his senatorial middle. "We shall prosecute for the honor of France!"

There was no prosecuting, for there was no way to pin defamation charges on the authorship of *The Gangrene*. The six Algerians were tortured all right, and no one inspired their testimony, dictated it, or wrote it for them. Already Alleg's book, *The Question*, had been called a pack of infamous lies, allegedly written by a hired pen; author and publisher were to be tried and convicted. Three and a half years have elapsed, and neither Alleg nor his publisher ever heard from the Public Prosecutor. For all its novelty, the Fifth Republic — Mr. Malraux notwithstanding — was unable to instill some novel spirit in the stale imagination of the French cops. Regimes come and go, the police remain. Yet, there is a difference. Alleg was tortured in Algiers, the six Algerians were tortured in Paris. The former's flesh was ripped open in the cellars of a city abandoned to the arbitrary rule of the military, the Algerians' flesh was ripped open under the cultured sky of *la Ville Lumière* — just around the corner from the official residence of France's highest magistrate.

One must allow that the French are no innovators in the art of "pacification." All the colonial powers have a history of genocides, deportations and torturing of the "shitty intellectuals" — a fitting name for those natives who dare to evince the symptoms of a social consciousness. True, only in recent years French *gendarmérie*, Foreign Legion and regular troops have slaughtered eighty thousand Malgaches during the 1947 Madagascar riots;

true, the 1945 repression among the Algerian Kabyls resulted in forty-five thousand dead²; true, a few days after the present "rebellion" started on November 1, 1954, several thousand perfectly innocent Algerians were executed in the region of Philippeville alone; true, since then the summary executions are estimated to run to the thousands.³ Yet, the French are not especially notable for their deeds in this regard. In matters of savagery, no colonial power should feel inferior to them. The British, for one, who decimated the Mau-Mau, who purposely organized famines in India, with casualties mounting to millions, have nothing to envy their neighbors across the Channel. However, colonial repression being directed against the natives, the colonists' brutality was reserved for local consumption: there was no exportation of it to the "Motherland." Quite the contrary. Whenever an echo of these bloody practices reached the "civilizing nation," one was sure to hear the opposition at hand yell murder. *The Gangrene* derives its particular importance from the fact that, for the first time, here is a testimony of colonial atrocities being straightforwardly imported and implanted at home. In a way, just as Rome was barbarized by the Barbarians she had conquered, so present day France seems contaminated by the basic moral and intellectual backwardness of the very people she had sent to colonize her possessions overseas.

The odd million Europeans who live in Algeria are, with few exceptions (about 3%), economically unproductive. There is no working class worth speaking of. Farmers excluded — and it must be kept in mind that these are mostly vinegrowers producing a commodity wholly untouched by the Moslems — the bulk of the Whites consists of shopkeepers, barbers, bartenders, taxi and truck drivers, employees of various kinds, etc. As a body, these people with hardened arteries; none are liable or even willing to be assimilated into a new social structure. Without subsidies from the French government on the one hand, and above all the century old exploitation of native labor on the other hand, their economical set up would collapse overnight. Exported to the mainland with preferential fiscal tariffs, the Algerian wine is adulterated and sold as industrial alcohol at a heavy loss. As an example of land distribution, let us mention that the average cultivated acreage is 300 acres per European, 8 acres per Arab. The income is, respectively, 7,800 new francs (\$1,560) and 220 new francs (\$44.00) per annum. Over 25% of the active Moslem population is endemically out of work. Illiteracy is general. Only 15% of the Arabs speak French. Next to one million seven hundred thousand children do not receive any schooling. In 1953, nine vocational centers totalled only 130 Arab apprentices. If, as a whole, the European here lives on an inferior

²Among other things, the repressive measures called for the deportation of any person caught singing the hymn to Messali Hadji ("Oh, brethren, awake! The wind of our land is blowing. The lion Messali has wafted it. The lion of lions swore to our freedom.") If another member of the same family committed the same offense, the whole household was deported and their belongings confiscated. Tobacco being a State monopoly, the refusal to light a French cigarette in the street was considered "a crime against the State."

³Three of the most courageous attorneys who made it a point of honor to take up the defense of hundreds upon hundreds of Algerians before the military courts, stress in a letter to the President of the International Red Cross that they exclude from the count of summary executions those who are executed in the heat of military action. Considered as having been summarily shot are, a) the fighters of the A.L.N. (Army of National Liberation) taken prisoners and previously disarmed; b) civil prisoners; c) "suspects" detained by the police; d) people arrested in the street round ups or in their homes.

level to that of his counterpart in the Metropolis, the prevailing social climate in Algeria provides him with a particular incentive, namely lording it over the Arab. Though the French have been occupying the country for over 125 years, mixed marriages are extremely rare. When speaking of their servants, even the lower class Whites will say: "My Arab, my Fatma." They are referred to by all sorts of derogatory nicknames, and treated accordingly. Now, with a full fledged war that has been going on for the past six years, a new incentive has boosted the old one: as carrion breeds vermin, so an army of six hundred thousand men spending their pay on the spot breeds quasi miraculous profits. One must understand that the local Whites have settled down in *their* war, have turned it into a way of living, with all the mores such a situation implies. Peace, and the subsequent Algerian independence, would mean for them losing both their traditional privileges and their newly acquired source of benefits. The odds at stake give the measure of their passionate involvement.

During the 1947 elections none of the Arab political movements fought for more than local democratic institutions, as explicitly provided by the letter and spirit of the French Constitution. There was no thought of "integration," not to speak of national independence. But the elections were fantastically rigged. The so-called integration ("France from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset," "Every Arab a Frenchman *à part entière*"), which the Algerian Whites now offer as a substitute and a life-saving panacea likely to exorcize the specter of an Algerian State, was but yesterday more of a blasphemy to their ears than cursing God. In fact, "intergration" is a sinister joke. It would call for an expenditure of some twenty-five billion dollars per annum — an effort the French economy cannot bear without wrecking itself. (France devotes only 17.6% of her national output to the formation of gross capital, as against 20.8% for Italy, 22.9% for Germany, 25.2% for Holland, etc.) After some fifteen years of "integration" the individual income of a Frenchman would fall beneath the present average level in Russia, while the income of an Arab would increase by only 50% during the first decade, passing from \$44.00 to \$66.00 a year. Also, given the unequal demographic growth between French and Arabs, the latter would outnumber the former after a span of fifty years: it would be Algeria integrating France, not France integrating Algeria.

When a social class falls back on torture as a means of checking a historical process, that class thereby acknowledges its own disruption. Not that in thriving societies torture is nonexistent. Intrinsically, every type of social organization men have devised so far is a scaffolding of vertical restrictive taboos and horizontal repressive sanctions. Moreover, no matter how civilized a community, its police have an itch for brutality: the big hearted, broad grinning *pater familias* cop, protector of widow and orphan, is about as genuine as Milton Berl's humor. Still, in "normal times," instead of being a common practice, torture is so to speak the private enterprise of private torturers. But come social unrest, come the time when the legal repressive machinery fails to insure the "peaceful" domination of the privileged over the exploited, and the private torturer is hoisted to the status of a savior. Even as he becomes the Guardian Angel, the blackjack becomes the exalted instrument of Order. For Order, as the literate have

known since Goethe, transcends justice, and Disorder, as even the illiterate should know, goes counter *la Patrie*. "I was tortured by the Nazis; now I do it myself," was the pert remark, in *The Gangrene*, of a French patriot in the act of torturing an Algerian patriot. Voltaire once wondered why a patriot must find his natural enemy in the patriot across the border. In fact, in contrast to the Romantic lover, he hates whoever isn't in love with his beloved. He wants her courted, cherished, flattered, or else —. Yet, paradoxically, he is a jealous lover; he'll shatter his beloved's bones should she behave in a manner he deems improper. Thus the European in Algeria cares for France inasmuch as France will care to keep Algeria in his lap. In the last analysis his concern with *la Patrie* is to Algerianize France. But his is a lost battle. No matter how deep the wounds he inflicts on others, the gangrene is well inside his own flesh. From the vantage point of history, his are the savage kicks of the dying.

Daniel Leary

In Search of a Center

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *HER*. New York: New Directions. \$1.25.

Donald Winks, *A Question of Innocence*. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$3.95.

Gerald Weales, *Tale for the Bluebird*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.95.

Edward Hoagland, *The Circle Home*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. \$4.50.

Virginia Woolf once wrote that after the multitudinous impression of a first reading, after "the intoxication of rhythm has died down and the splendour of words has faded, a visionary shape will return," the book "will float to the top of the mind as a whole." The four American novels that I am reviewing can be seen in the psychic distance as presenting a somewhat similar visionary shape. Each of the novels is concerned with what seems to be our representative native theme. For if there is an American fiction it is this — the adventures likely to befall a centerless individual en route through the flow and conflict of illusions towards some still undisclosed center.

Though Lawrence Ferlinghetti is the owner of the City Lights Bookshop, headquarters for the San Francisco "beat" movement, and has himself produced a volume of occasionally metered protests, I was not bemused

by *Her's* "intoxication of rhythm" or "splendor of words." In the calm, after a reading of this prose poem or poetic novel, what comes to the surface seems to be an amorphous product of logorrhea kept afloat by the buoyant memory of Dylan Thomas and perhaps given substance by the experiments of James Joyce. There are passages which go on for pages with little or no punctuation, passages which merge images in what sometimes seems an adolescently unmodulated nightmare of cancers, breasts, sperm, vulvas, phalli, leprosy and flushed toilets. But there are passages, too, which can take wing as in this fragment from the closing section:

. . . I feel my funny phony face is on so square at last my squarer self comes back to find me where in a windless morning an endless time is blowing over foot-holding hills beyond a tolling town where she with longing hair comes towards me with my hope and youth in a heavenhold of interpetaled love in a secret place in an acre of spring in the sweet grass at the end of the enchanted eleventh valley in the final fire where burns the world and I go kissing crowds to discover my Sunday wife.

Reality in this novel is all a fluid jumble and has no center other than the mind of the male protagonist as he searches for his completion, for his Sunday wife, for his Jungian "anima." Paradoxically, the very fact that the censor of this mind has been removed seems to produce a monotonously repetitious sequence of babbling rhyme associations which invariably lead to the hero's affirmation of self through protest and erection. As the protagonist blunders along "looking for the main character of my life," the sustaining image becomes that of the darkened movie house in which the "celluloid sequence" seems to be coiling and recoiling both image and existence, and this vision of reality may in part explain the technique with its flowing sentences, its merging of objects and its fuddling of time and space. In this theater of his mind, the hero has turned his back on life, for he is a projector rather than a camera. The loss is considerable for this totally expressionistic approach which dispenses with Joyce's Dublin or Thomas' Llareggub utterly fails the author when he attempts to enlarge these erotic dreams into symbolic proportions.

Though the scenes keep shifting, the descriptions are so self-consciously clever, so pseudo-poetic, that the reader feels the world has been removed to make room for the pose of the artist in the act of seeing himself. And though the sexual organs and breasts and sperm and eggs recur with dithyrambic insistence, apparently building up to a much longed for rebirth, there is none of the archetypal joy of Dylan Thomas. The hero constantly refers to himself as a disgusting "Fatso," and it becomes apparent as the pages unwind that the sex imagery itself shares in a certain Manichean blurring of the lenses.

A Question of Innocence underscores the modern American author's difficulty in striking and holding a poised relation to reality. Mr. Winks does not turn his back on life, but rather he tends to crowd life too closely. As the book jacket tells us, "Mr. Winks captures the atmosphere of New York . . . but he is also equally concerned with those larger

questions of personal honor and human guilt which are the territory of every serious novelist from Balzac to Evelyn Waugh." And, indeed, I found myself recalling *Brideshead Revisited* as the young man from the outside, the young man attempting to find himself, discovers that there is no center, that the enormously wealthy McClure family is itself centrifugally whirling about a void whose emptiness is only emphasized by the shrewd but ineffective machinations of the family Jesuit. When Henry Adams, the novel's hero or observer, confesses that at the end of his experiences with the McClures "I was as I had always been, an outsider," he reveals the novel's weakness. Adams remains so much the outsider that one never is able to live in the inner climate, to sense the reality of a son's apostasy, of a mother's tortured tension between religious convictions and infidelity, of a daughter's longing for, and reaction to, what may have been a miracle. The novel treats of materials that would intrigue a Graham Greene but from the perspective of a J. P. Marquand.

The visionary shape that floats to the surface is that of a group of depressed people on board a fog enshrouded sight-seeing boat torturing each other with plans for marriages they know are doomed. The sight-seeing tour permits Adams to view religion and sex at the Y.M.C.A., truth and fiction on Madison Avenue, the varieties of New York parties and the pathos of princes in exile and men in confusion. And each sight, in proportion to the intensity of presentation, elicits the unanswerable question of guilt and innocence. Actually, this is the perennial question of how to reconcile the individual's desires and society's demands.

This question is not unlike Mr. Ferlinghetti's, but the answer in terms of style is very different. In spite of, or perhaps because of, Mr. Winks' difficulty with the inner reality, his tone strikes a note of noble sadness, as its peculiar angle of vision picks up the apparently hopeless contrariety of human life. Thus the oddly sobering first reactions to living in New York are not analyzed, and yet the mood established prepares for the hero's experience with the McClures and also permits the author to reflect Adams' growing awareness of his sensitive, humanistic skepticism:

. . . you don't live in the city at all. You exist, all right, but . . . in a void. You are invisible. It is quite another thing from being alone, this loneliness; and if you are not strong enough to take it, or lucky enough to stumble on the right path, the burden of being alone and invisible among eight million people will break you, as it does so many.

Finding it impossible to justify either assertion or denial, Mr. Winks' protagonist ultimately withdraws to a doctrine of sustained tensions and strikes a pose not between inner and outer realities but between outer forces. Henry Adams' maintaining of this pose ironically makes him something of a center among those whom he hopes will centralize his own life. Seen in more general terms the perspective of Mr. Winks' main character is almost irresistibly compelling since it is presented in a period when political and social tensions, cosmic in stature, are simply the inescapable facts of life. The skeptical yet courageous acceptance of Henry Adams makes by contrast Mr. Ferlinghetti's hero seem like "a great natural that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole."

A few years ago Mr. Gerald Weales wrote a children's book *Miss Grimsbee is a Witch*, which delightfully combined the every day and fantasy while making sly comments on the contemporary situation. In *Tale for the Bluebird* he uses a similar approach but it is important to note that the fantasy, far from being a means of escape, is a technique for short-cutting from one level of reality to another. The outer reality is presented with a joyous plethora of detail that is constantly controlled by the author's awareness of the dangers and delights of the ridiculous, an awareness that parenthetically breaks in upon the narrative flow, yet manages to do this without cloying cuteness. Indeed the originality of the style lies not only in a certain controlled looseness of syntax, but more particularly in a refreshing merging of exact description with far-ranging metaphors. This precise looseness is found in his description of a "beat" poet:

At a distance, there was something vaguely familiar about the man in the road . . . It was something in the way that he stood, not with the careful dignity of the hitchhiker who wants to impress the driver with his respectability, nor with the careless slouch that declares, like a name tag, college boy on a summer's bumming, but with a weaving bob to no audible music. When I stopped in front of him, the face, one borrowed from a mischievous small boy and kept for thirty years in a reasonable state of preservation, was unknown to me — except as a type . . . He lifted his left foot, in a white sneaker of course, and tapped it three times, "One . . . two . . . three," like a conductor about to get the brass band ready, and lifting his arms toward heaven or the roof of my car, called out, "WHOOIE, man, We're off."

On the surface the novel is a picaresque recounting of the adventures of Mr. Constance Firth as he seeks for a certain mysterious ornamental box, which represents his bluebird of happiness, his longed for but elusive center. In his travels Constance encounters other seekers including a preacher who has lost his faith, a millionaire who cannot buy friends, a professor who has seen the skull beneath the flesh, an artist who strives for the unattainable and a little old lady who finds that time hangs heavy. It is, however, the inner reality that supplies the visionary shape — that of a bus trip through an ever-changing and always intriguing territory, a bus trip — during which the passengers, protected by the anonymity of a public vehicle, reveal their dreams, their hidden motivations.

I suppose that Constance Firth, with his tranquil but inexhaustible appetite for experience, can be seen as a 'dharma bum' who knows instinctively from the very beginning that the "way is the end." He can say in the opening pages, "I am not at all sure just what it is I am looking for, but I do know that I have not come across it yet . . . The important thing is the looking. My wanderings are my own. I belong to no group and no generation." And at the close when all the seekers find the box empty, when the momentary babble of disappointment has subsided, there is a reassuring re-engagement with the business of making a life out of the materials at hand. At the close the hero, who had used a number of pseudonyms throughout the novel, assumes his own name, and with it he

tacitly recognizes that it is only the free man — the man free of illusions — who finds the value of life is in the art of living.

Such semi-philosophic statements, however, miss the tone of the book which is one of "joie de vivre." Mr. Weales describes his hero as being nondescript, but he is a rare liberated psyche travelling through society noting its frauds and its treasures, and reflecting the candidness of a child, the spirit of an adventurer and the considerable style of a very promising author.

The first two-thirds of Edward Hoagland's *The Circle Home* deal with the conflict in a man's life between his need for action and adventure, represented in a minutely detailed presentation of a New York boxers' gym, and his desire for the comfort and stability of domestic life, represented by flashbacks to a Sunday wife left in Boston. The last third of the novel is an 'on the road' narrative which is also a journey in memory and growing understanding. It is, however, the scenes at the Better Champions' Gym which linger in the mind, for Hoagland's world is seen in terms of a fighting match. It is a world in which James De Jesus, who cares only for a semblance of order, is the proprietor, in which the manager, Harold Straws, and his associates live on the sweat and blood of others, in which trainers move from fighter to fighter like disinterested teachers, in which the spectators applaud particularly spirited exchanges, and in which Kelly, the hero, is trying to attain simultaneously easy money and glory. The various types of boxers — the arrogant, the harrowed, the workman-like, the shrewd, the brawny, the young and the old — all have their counterparts in the world outside the gym.

The main bout, however, is between man and woman, and all the weapons are used — sex, religion, children, money and memories. Hoagland is as conscious of man's need for woman as is Ferlinghetti in *Her*. Kelly is like the little boy described in the opening pages:

A little kid walked down the street alongside Kelly and ignored him . . . It was the kind of tomcat-sized kid who might run into the traffic, must have just busted out of its highchair. It walked with a roll and a swagger, not only because it was learning, and covered the ground. Nothing could stop it . . . Bumpitty-Bump it walked, legs lifted wide. A bold stare at articles of trash . . . It walked along with a tough-guy roll at a steady clip getting a gander at stuff but not being foxed into stopping. Bumpitty-Bump. and Bumpitty-Bump went its breathing too, Kelly could hear. But not the gaze: steady and true. It was male.

And Kelly throughout seeks in memory and experience a woman who can be both a mother and a wife to his maleness. There is Patsy, the wife he has left, who is presented in a number of passages splendid in their physical candor and lyrical impulse. In the opening section there is Margaret, a woman who keeps him; in the middle section there are a number of women recalled in flashbacks; and finally there is Amanda, who helps him grow up. At the close, faced with a choice between the irresponsible and destructive courage of a gangster and the responsible and creative courage of an old lumberman, Kelly shows signs of having matured enough to become a responsible husband.

Though the world of *The Circle Home* is that of the uneducated and half-educated, Mr. Hoagland makes little use of verbal devices used by the other authors considered in this review, devices such as slurred elisions, agglutinative syntax and the somnolent rhythms of vernacular speech. The Hemingway-like syntax is unmodified and slightly aloof, resulting in the almost contradictory effects of uncomplicated immediacy and infused value. There is no attempt to merge poetry and prose and yet there are passages which put one in mind of the lyrics of John Donne:

(Kelly) was afraid of being gored but Patsy was braver and since he'd complained of his thirst, she milked a very tame cow and made him drink from her hand. He was scared of the cow but he'd loved Patsy's hand, he'd loved the sensation of drinking from it; and "You" they'd whispered to each other, mouth against mouth, and brought their foreheads together until Patsy's tickled just from the approach. Giggling, Patsy wrapped her arm around and tried to wrestle him over her hip. Nose to nose they laughed at their reflections in each other's eyes, distorted by the curve like in a fun-house mirror. He kissed her hands, still milky, and cupped her ear and told her that he loved her in words so low and fragmented no one not in love with him could understand.

This passage also illustrates the wonderful physicality of Mr. Hoagland's style which seems somehow to transcend the carefully described outer reality. In this passage the two people have merged into one body, but in other equally successful sections which incorporate similar approaches the explanation is more elusive. Perhaps the effect, in part, is achieved through a merging of description and movement resulting in a kinetic energy that succeeds in conveying the human presence itself. Under any circumstances, it seems to me that Mr. Hoagland has been the most successful of the authors considered in striking a felicitous pose between the inner and outer, between the spirit and the flesh.

There are two ways of being at home. One method is simply to stay home until you get used to it. Not many of our American authors have the patience or the skill for this approach. The other is to travel all the way around the globe until you gratefully come back to it. Each of the four authors considered begins in a state of displacement, takes a journey — psychological, fanciful, social, or memory-filled — and at the close and with varying tones of acceptance, arrives at the insight that "you can go home again."

Ruby Cohn

A French View of Anglo-American Fiction

Jean-Jacques Mayoux, *Vivants Piliers*. Paris: Julliard. 13.20 n.f.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Professor Mayoux' *Vivants Piliers* is that a man of his views on *public* responsibility, should have chosen to write about authors who constructed *private* worlds in their fiction. As he indicates in his Conclusion, Professor Mayoux believes strongly in phenomenal and social reality (a belief that led this Sorbonne Professor to be a Resistance leader during the war, to represent the French government-in-exile in Algiers and London, to sign the recent "Declaration of 121" on Insubordination in the Algerian War), but, unlike so many active liberals, he has never reduced literature to social realism, or even felt that that was an interesting aspect for critical exploration. Quite the contrary; his *Vivants Piliers* deals with nine figures of Anglo-American literature, who, to different degrees, reject an objective and chronological world in order to focus more intensely upon a subjective reality. And in so doing, Professor Mayoux insists, these artists have deepened immeasurably our own penetration into our separate selves.

In his introduction, Mayoux juxtaposes Diderot, the most Germanic of Frenchmen, against Coleridge, the most Germanic of Englishmen, as polar opposites in their conceptions of the artistic imagination. Diderot, accepting the objective reality of phenomena, the organic interrelatedness of the universe, is preoccupied with the way the imagination works so as to imitate that universe in art. His hieroglyphs are shorthand symbols for existing organic relations, suggesting those relations both denotatively and connotatively. For Coleridge, on the other hand, reality is a mysterious transcendence that can be seized only suddenly and whole, through symbols or analogies, and not through Diderotesque associations. Scattered through Coleridge's writings are indications that such analogies can fuse word and thing, subject and object. Diderot's is an analytic, static, and expressive art; that of Coleridge is synthetic, dynamic, and cognitive. Diderot's approach, Mayoux suggests, resembles that of the realistic novelist, and Coleridge's that of the intuitive poet. (The French, from M. Jourdain to Sartre, have been trying to define the boundary-line between poetry and prose.)

Although Mayoux' critical essays are concerned with writers of prose, and more especially of prose fiction, he is fascinated by his nine writers largely because their prose has been invaded by the attitudes of poetry. Consciously or not, these novelists are heirs of Coleridge, allowing essence to absorb mere existence. Mayoux traces several leitmotifs from Coleridge's

journals through the works of these artists — a heightened sense of solitude; a non-specificity of chronological time and geographical space; an intense, sensuous, and alogical dream-atmosphere in which time is subjectively described.¹

So tightly paced and suggestive is Mayoux' criticism that summary is difficult, but scattered comments may indicate the range. The first and only Englishman in these essays on nine major writers in the English language is Thomas DeQuincey, who, because of his skillful manipulation of time, is viewed by Mayoux as a forerunner of Proust, Joyce, Faulkner, and Beckett. As early as *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, De Quincey creates his own idiosyncratic subjective time to translate the texture of his experience, in which dream, memory, and ritual replaces chronology. In De Quincey's work, "Actual lived time glides into a dreamlike state." Opium may have helped his search into a labyrinthine, oneiric past, but Mayoux is sure that it was not the initiating cause.

In his fictional works such as *The Revolt of the Tartars*, De Quincey adroitly plays the time of the writing of the story against that of its action. Even more dramatically in *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*, De Quincey maintains a tension between the time of the victim and that of the assassin, and, later, between that of the assassin and that of his would-be-obstructor. Again and again, in fiction, autobiography, and even criticism, De Quincey denies chronology so as to be more receptive to a dreamlike state which is "at once an artificial paradise and a means of cognition."

Crossing the ocean to examine, successively, Hawthorne, Melville, and James, Professor Mayoux links these Americans to De Quincey by their obsessive, often hallucinatory sense of solitude. In Hawthorne and Melville, too, there is a repetition of the hunted-hunter theme, and a violence to chronology that results in a haunting vision of the eternal. Sparing of footnotes, Professor Maynoux nevertheless gives the impression of having read and digested all relevant biography, scholarship, and criticism concerning these much studied giants of American literature. For the English-language reader, there are few revelations (although there is a particularly competent stylistic commentary on Melville, to whom Mayoux has already devoted a book, *Melville Par Lui-Même*), but the French reader has badly needed these insights into figures he has only recently discovered.

With Henry James, we enter a more subtle symbolic fiction, where there are no scarlet letters or white whales (and only one golden bowl), but where themes are symbolized in exquisitely nuanced relationships. Mayoux' analysis hovers around a few central motifs — solitude, renunciation, voyeurism and vision through art — but these familiar approaches in James criticism are often illuminated by reference to French literature. The central James theme of renunciation, for example, is made immediately accessible to the French reader by dubbing it "cornélien," for renunciation is, of course, the great gesture of Corneille's heroes. Of the last James novels and their delicate structure, Mayoux says, "This is Mallarmé translated into a prose as lightened of material reference as the verses themselves."

¹Professor Mayoux does not seem to be familiar with Joseph Frank's seminal essay on Spatial Form in Literature, which examines similar themes in a different context.

The most meaningful comparison is probably that of James and Proust. Far from Flaubert (to whom James pays homage in his own criticism), taught the lesson of *l'art pour l'art* by Gautier, James is like Proust in participating in a social life, and in succeeding in converting that life into art. But whereas Proust views life and art through the eyes of his narrator, James distributes his eyes among those exquisitely aware "reflectors," who are able to understand the lives that others merely live.

Like other critics, Mayoux couples James and Conrad: "Two men, two romantics, nostalgic and without a country, came from afar towards the sunset of Victorianism, to glorify the very values that were fading out of existence, by interiorizing them, by reducing them to an essence." Where the James hero asserts his liberty by renunciation, Conrad's hero almost always meets disaster through attempting to regain a lost liberty. Conrad's most characteristic situations, affirms Mayoux, are "irremediable" (a word that Malraux used for Faulkner's *Sanctuary*). Absurdly, man may fling himself against his fate, but his failure is a foregone conclusion — detailed by Conrad in all its agony. The world as such makes no sense; only the artist can endow it with meaning. Through his character Marlow — "The best we can hope for is to know oneself a little" — Conrad sets about making that sense, endowing that meaning, and thereby introduces into the novel itself what James confined to his prefaces — the imagination at work, the artist creating the world.

The transition to Joyce, "fabulous artificer," is inevitable. Mayoux entitles his chapter "The Heresy of James Joyce" — a heresy that consists of substituting himself for God as the agent of creation. As early as the *Portrait*, Joyce makes of style an infinitely variable and plastic medium; by his incomparable linguistic versatility, Joyce converts all reality to subjectivity; flesh is remade as word. In spite of the polymorphism of the *Portrait*, however, there is still a sporadic entente between Stephen and Joyce. But in *Ulysses* a parodic distance is consistently maintained. The momentary perception of reality — the epiphany of *Stephen Hero* — is replaced in *Ulysses* by the eternality of the Here and Now. Everyman, Everywoman, Everycity are the characters of this novel which is garbed in the mundane and quotidian. Under the apparent differences between Homer's world and ours lies the more profound identity.

Joyce's linguistic achievement in *Ulysses* ranges from the colloquial immediacy of the seemingly realistic to the counterpoint fugues, which finally fulfill the old Symbolist dream to "reprendre a la musique son bien." But where *Ulysses* only occasionally breaks into such poetry, *Finnegans Wake* is the complete synthesis of prose and poetry, of expressionism and impressionism, always suggesting an object while annihilating the subject. Cutting through the several critical discussions about who is the dreamer, Mayoux quotes Schopenhauer on the world: "It is an enormous dream dreamed by a single being, but in such a way that all the characters of the dream are also dreaming." *Finnegans Wake* is structured by Night and the family, as *Ulysses* was by Day and the family, but in the dream novel, the structure is cyclical, as suggested to Joyce by Vico.

Vico also suggested to Joyce what Mayoux calls his supreme heresy — the creation of a vocabulary common to all spoken languages. Summing up,

Mayoux sees Joyce as the grandson of the Flaubert who dreamed of writing a book with no subject, but which would be pure style; as the son of the Mallarmé of *Coup de Des*, who sought to express the Absolute. More than Proust, Mayoux thinks, Joyce poses the problem of our literature, and how, if at all, life is to nourish it: "Life is not made to be lived but to be expressed."

Influenced by Joyce, and yet reacting against him, Virginia Woolf seeks not to accomplish the creation of a world, but to convey the inner anguish of living in this world. The artist creates form, not life, and the artist Virginia Woolf does so by moving incessantly from object to subject, from macrocosm to microcosm. In his discussion of Virginia Woolf, Mayoux himself moves constantly from her life to her works, in a way that Americans, since the advent of the New Criticism, would be inhibited about. After examining Virginia Woolf's relationship with a domineering father, Mayoux turns to the tendency in her works to convert subject to object, then to her search (like that of Proust) for salvation through art; in her last novel, *Between the Acts*, art becomes a game of mirrors in which the real is unrecognizable and unknowable; perhaps this was the prelude to her suicide. Dangerous as this indiscriminate integration of biography and literature may be, Mayoux' portrait of Virginia Woolf nevertheless provides provocative insights into the works themselves.

Although Mayoux politely refrains from reminding us that Faulkner is a French discovery, his analysis follows the lines laid down by such French enthusiasts as Malraux, Coindreau, and Sartre, who dwell upon Faulkner's metaphysics, his obsession with time and destiny. The word "irremediable," by which Malraux characterized *Sanctuary* in 1933, is applied by Mayoux to other Faulkner novels, and, finally, to Faulkner's conception of the human condition. Irrevocable as his doom may be, however, the Faulkner hero goes down struggling, and it is in that struggle that Mayoux discovers much of Faulkner's power and beauty.

Since Faulkner's heroes carry their tragic destiny within themselves, chronological time is neglected in order to concentrate on interior, psychological time. Comparing Time in Proust and Faulkner, Mayoux analyzes: "Proust goes back in time with a sudden leap so as to move forwards towards the final present by gradual illuminations; Faulkner goes back in small jumps hence the immobility of many of his scenes, is never at home anywhere, but seeks, starting from the present, to come to a dramatic understanding of old, dusty stories. This drama of discovery moves in the opposite direction from the unfolding action."

Nor is it the central actor, the "I," who does the discovering, but more or less involved observers, even voyeurs, which leads to the brilliant technical feats that the French admire in Faulkner. "It is not in a particular imagination, but *between imaginations* that the characters, the story, the links of the plot, the unleashing of forces rise up like a spectre, which finally appears more real than the first reality from which all of them are supposed to emanate, but whose existence we sometimes arrive at doubting; so that the novel becomes reality itself." (My italics)

Although Mayoux nowhere makes the flat statement that the writers he has chosen are the greatest in Anglo-American fiction, it is evident by the

end of his book that he so considers them, and it is a pleasure to find Samuel Beckett among them. As in the writers already studied, it is Beckett's obsessions that are at the root of his literary power: a Protestant heritage of guilt and damnation. Writing in the twentieth century, however, and further away than Hawthorne or Melville from his Calvinist ancestors, Beckett is aware that even these ruins of religion are a human invention; first man invented God, then His abandonment of His children. Man's solitude is rendered more absolute than ever before: "The Beckettian character acknowledges nothing that surrounds him, not even, if he sees it, his own body." Hell itself is in the mind, peopled with a fictional "they" who is confused intermittently with "I." "The 'I,' insofar as it subsists, is the paralysed spectator of inept pantomimes of a microcosm without liberty and without hope." And part of the punishment — the major part perhaps — is the compulsion and the impossibility of writing. The anguish of artistic creation has never been described with greater intensity than in the *Unnamable*. All of Beckett's works involve a Blakian drama, a conflict between "the creator in spite of himself or selves, and his recalcitrant creations."

Beckett, Mayoux finds, is Joyce's heir in that his symbolism expresses not only a vision of the world, but a world in itself. Joyce, however, embraces more and more — word, image, language, myth — as he continues to create; Beckett shrinks more and more, even to amputating the physical characteristics of his characters, in an attempt to arrive at himself. By cruel parody, Beckett rejects all fictional consolation and illusion. Disdaining Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief," Beckett places the very impossibility of belief at the center of his fiction; words are lies by definition. Feeling his exile as man and artist more keenly than any of his predecessors, Beckett has voluntarily chosen French, the language of his exile; nevertheless, by the Protestant heritage which he converts into a mordant symbolic vision, he is grouped by Mayoux with the other eight giants of Anglo-American fiction.

A sense of exile seems to be endemic to the artistic condition of Mayoux' nine writers — among whom four are American, two Irish, one Polish, and one a woman. But then this image of the artist — wandering alone through a woods of symbols which *stare at him* — along with that of the "profound, shadowy unity" he seeks, is suggested in the Baudelaire sonnet from which Mayoux borrowed his title.

CORRESPONDANCES

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.
Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.
Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
— Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

David Schoenbaum

About the Origins

A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*.
London: Hamish, Hamilton. 25s.

A violin maker in Cologne once confided to me that it was British capital that had caused World War II. British industrialists with a sharp eye for destructive talent had put their money on Hitler so that there would be a war, they'd get rich, Germany would be destroyed and they'd get richer. They must have been getting a little anxious by the summer of 1940. I suggested. Yes, sir, he agreed, but it turned out all right. Churchill had better astrologers than Hitler. I repeated the story, not with effect, to a friend as quickly as possible. He looked thoughtfully out the window for a moment. "That's a version I've never heard before," he said. One has this feeling reading A. J. P. Taylor. "The war of 1939, far from being premeditated, was a mistake, the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders." This is the theme of Mr. Taylor's new study. "Writers of great authority," he tells us, "have seen in Hitler a system-maker, deliberately preparing from the first a great war which would destroy existing civilisation and make him master of the world. In my opinion, statesmen are too absorbed by events to follow a preconceived plan. . . . The systems are created by historians, as happened with Napoleon; and the systems attributed to Hitler are really those of Hugh Trevor-Roper, Elizabeth Wiskemann, and Alan Bullock."

The version we're more familiar with, of course, goes like this:

"Many, perhaps most, Germans were reluctant to make the sacrifices demanded by rearmament and total war; but they desired the prize which only total war would give. . . . During the preceding eighty years the Germans had sacrificed to the Reich all their liberties; they demanded as reward the enslavement of others. . . . By no other means could the Reich be held together. It had been made by conquest and for conquest; if it ever gave up its career of conquest, it would dissolve."

As the author of this statement explains, "This book is an attempt to plot the course of German history; it seeks to show that it was no more a

mistake for the German people to end up with Hitler than it is an accident when a river flows into the sea, though the process is, I daresay, very unpleasant for the fresh water."

This is the familiar version and its author — no doubt recognized already by the brightest members of the class — is A. J. P. Taylor. That is, A. J. P. Taylor, author of *The Course of German History*, first published in 1945, last reprinted in December, 1959.

What's wrong with this version? As Taylor tells us in his *new* book:

Hitler was an extraordinary man: . . . but his policy is capable of rational explanation and it is on these that history is built. The escape into irrationality is no doubt easier. The blame for war can be put on Hitler's Nihilism instead of on the faults and failures of European statesmen — faults and failures which their public shared. Human blunders, however, usually do more to shape history than human wickedness. At any rate this is a rival dogma which is worth developing, if only as an intellectual exercise.

This, then, is a history of blunders — big blunders, little blunders, blunders of stupidity, over sophistication and panic, blunders of intent, blunders of omission, blunders of excessive zeal, blunders of excessive caution, British blunders, French blunders, Italian blunders, Czech, Polish and Hungarian blunders, and, it goes without saying, German Blunders, ". . . a story without heroes; and perhaps even without villains," as Taylor tells us. War began, according to Taylor, because an overcommitted Hitler waited till August 29, 1939, to launch a diplomatic initiative — direct negotiation with Poland — he should have launched on August 28. A day's grace "and the breach — between Poland and her guarantors — would have been wide open." This was the irrevocable blunder.

And so on backwards. Poland was lost because the Western Allies had blundered away Soviet support by losing Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was blundered away because the Allies had blundered away the Sudetenland at Munich. Czech sovereignty was lost because the Western Allies had allowed Benes to blunder away his precarious equipoise by stomping out Slovak agitation and precipitating the Munich crisis. Benes' equipoise was blundered away by Franco-British hesitation about the Austrian *anschluss*. Austria was blundered away when a panic-stricken Schuschnigg forced Hitler's hand by calling a plebiscite to confirm Austrian independence in the face of Nazi threats. Nazi threats were accepted blunderingly at face value when the French, who blunderingly let themselves be intimidated by Hitler's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Geneva disarmament talks, com-pacted with the Soviet Union and allowed Hitler to reoccupy the Rhineland as ostensible reprisal.

". . . It was never Hitler's method to take the initiative. He liked others to do his work for him; and he waited for the inner weakening of the European systems, just as he had waited for the peace settlement to crumble of itself," says Taylor. There they are, "The Origins of the Second World War." Hitler let the Allies yield him sovereignty, then equality — military and otherwise. Then he got Austria, then the Sudetenland, then Czechoslovakia, then Memell and, then not Danzig but war.

Taylor won't overestimate the Austrian Nazi putsch of 1934 or Hitler's economic pressure on the Austrians, Nazi subsidies for Seyss-Inquart and diplomatic pressure for his participation in the Austrian government, Nazi cash and agitation in the Sudetenland or the well-rehearsed Konrad Henlein's Sudeten Nazi party. Taylor accepts Britain's guilty conscience and France's creeping despair, Bonnet's weakness of spirit and Chamberlain's weakness of mind, Schuschnigg's panic, Benes' helplessness and Beck's bubble-headed over-confidence. He adds a dash of Mussolini. He grants only that Hitler wanted "hegemony" but not necessarily war. He writes off each of Hitler's programmatic statements from *Mein Kampf* on because they're mutually inconsistent — as, in a sense, they are.

Damn right it's a "story without heroes," and if he did nothing else but remind us just how low and dishonest this decade was, Taylor might deserve the royalties he is very likely reaping. It would be nice to go even farther and hail Taylor's book as something more, an ingenious and consistent closed system. Ingenious it is. But closed it isn't, and can't be. It can't be closed without doing violence to the real world, without assuming 1) that states are just foreign policy machines cranking out policy in largely conventional forms — pacts, treaties, alliances, and 2) that Hitler's government conducted foreign relations like earlier German governments, and for the same reasons.

Leave out millions of men under arms, a high summer of largely self-induced nationalism and racism, an economy mortgaged from 1933 on to eventual colonial expansion and there may be a plausible system left. But historical reality as heretofore known has disappeared from sight. "If Hitler was a rational statesman," as James Joll wrote recently, "then Eichmann was a conscientious civil servant."

Nor is Taylor's line even consistent. Call it the line of arbitrary inevitability. Taylor, of course, is the arbiter. The *anschluss* was an accident, the annexation of Czechoslovakia was precipitated not by Hitler but by over-enthusiastic Hungarians. But had Hitler offered to negotiate with Poland on August 28 he must *inevitably* have split the Allied front and won Danzig and the corridor without war.

Taylor, when disposed, is the Heifetz of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Poincaré occupied the Ruhr in 1923 and lost the election of 1924. Therefore Poincaré lost the election because of the occupation of the Ruhr. Briand told Lloyd George a British military guarantee would be meaningless because the Germans could march to Bordeaux before it could be effected. In 1940 the Germans *did* march to Bordeaux before a British military guarantee could be made effective. Therefore a British military guarantee was meaningless and in a kind of un-sense, responsible for German success in 1940. (It's generally assumed that a miserably-prepared French army also shared some responsibility for its own defeat. Elsewhere in this book, in fact, Taylor concedes as much.)

"No one," Taylor observes in his introduction, "is going to write a book that will not interest others; least of all to write a book that does not interest himself." This is clear, and Taylor, the Teutonophobe Lord Beaverbrooks' Sunday morning bugle boy and a voluble unilateral disarmament, is no shrinking violet about making his vested interest clear too. *The Origins of*

the Second World War might be read as *The Origins of the Third World War* as seen by an Aldermaston marcher.

"I doubt whether much will be gained by waiting another ten or fifteen year [to write this book]; and much might be lost. The few survivors of civilisation may have given up reading books by then, let alone writing them," Taylor tells us.

"It was commonly assumed, as it still is," he declares like other unilateralists, "that the ideal aim should be equality of armaments with a possible opponent or group of opponents. This is, in fact, the most pointless of aims: too much if a country wishes only to defend itself, too little if it hopes to impose its will on the other side." Behind the screen of unilateralism, it's reassuring to catch an occasional glimpse of the old A. J. P. Taylor. "Without renouncing Germany's grievances, [Hitler] promised not to redress them by force — a high-sounding formula much used also by the West German government after the Second World War," he says. A. J. P. Taylor, according to reliable sources, is very nice indeed to his students. But he tends to be very hard on the truth.

Donald Emerson

The Man Who Would Be Dean

Robert Glynn Kelly, *A Lament for Barney Stone*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. \$3.95.

This novel concerns the great crisis in Professor Barney Stone's life. After eighteen years at Castleton University, he almost becomes a dean. Mr. Kelly proclaims in a prefatory notice that *A Lament for Barney Stone* is not an academic novel. "It is merely a novel in an academic setting," he insists. "It could just as well have had any number of other settings."

Perhaps some impossible prejudice is roused by the term "academic novel," and Mr. Kelly hopes to avoid it. In the sense that a character like Barney Stone could have confronted his problems in other fields, the novel might have had another setting; but if abstractly the problems are universal, concretely they are peculiar to the university scene. Mr. Kelly's disclaimer can't be taken seriously.

Like most academic novels, *A Lament for Barney Stone* is scantily concerned with students. For students, as everyone should know, are more a nuisance than anything else, and they merely get in the way of the research activities on which promotion depends, or distract attention from the other real business of the faculty — jockeying for position in the academic pecking order. At least, this impression can be supported from the academic novels of Randall Jarrell and John Aldridge as well as Mr. Kelly. Wives are of even less interest, in this particular work; Barney Stone is single, which is probably the symptom of one of his troubles, and none of the wives of the married faculty appear.

The novel thus presents a climax following eighteen years during which Barney Stone is seen in no disinterested personal relation, no unselfish friendship, and no intimacy of any warmth of feeling, however tepid. If he has any social life apart from academic politics, it does not appear. If he ever had parents, brothers or sisters, or a friend of his youth, Mr. Kelly has neglected to mention them. If he ever journeyed from Castleton University during his eighteen years, even to the annual charivari of the Modern Language Association, it left no impression.

Professor Barney Stone, in short, doesn't exist and never has, and Mr. Kelly has stuffed out a whole set of clichés about academic types to bolster this scarecrow. The best explanation is that in writing about academic man — Barney Stone seen only in the relations governed by the fact of his teaching in a university — the novelist has created the same kind of caricature as the sociologists perpetrated with their organization man. Take them together — economic man, organization man, academic man — they are equally silhouettes with voices and gestures, and they equally lack substance. Barney Stone has the advantage that part of the time he's funny, and Mr. Kelly has a decided edge on the sociologists in that, since he's showing rather than proving, he can exaggerate everybody and make them all ridiculous. Besides, he has a field for satire in the admitted timidities, politics, polite backbiting and hypocrisies of academic life. These are little different from their counterparts in other fields, but they can easily be made funnier: hardly anyone ever gets fired; nobody loses money in a failing business; they all cleave to interests which seem quixotic to plain level-headed money-making folk; and a genteel futility is believed to permeate the air. Since none of it matters very much, and since the types who have chosen the life would probably be safer if shut up permanently, everyone can be amused by their antics. So go the popular assumptions, and Mr. Kelly has preferred to subscribe to them rather than get below the level of institutional man in any of his characters. It's too bad, for there is God's plenty of novelistic material in the faculty on any campus in America. And faculties probably don't assay any higher in fakes and phonies than other professional groups.

But Mr. Kelly did insist that *A Lament For Barney Stone* is not an academic novel but a novel in an academic setting which could just as well have had any number of other settings. It is probably less profitable to ask What other settings? than to take Mr. Kelly's word for it and ask about the substance of the novel aside from peculiarities of setting.

The basic pattern seems to be the old initiation formula, with the postu-

lant to the academic priesthood being faced with strange practices, the nature of which perpetually eludes him. Barney may live the life for years; he may be shaped by forces he only vaguely understands; he certainly is unwillingly pushed from situation to situation he would like to have avoided. But whether he's an Assistant, Associate, or full Professor, or a potential Dean, poor Barney is never quite hep. To some degree, Barney Stone is Babbitt among the books, with the reservation that he never experiences Babbitt's pride in Zenith or the apostolic fervor of Babbitt's gospel of service-for-profit. He doesn't undergo anything like Babbitt's futile rebellion. But he is kin to the frustrated business man in his realization that his life has been one long pretense and that he has never done anything he wanted to. This is the point where Barney Stone becomes representative of all the generations of fed-up Americans in colleges, corporations, professions and trades, living what Thoreau called lives of quiet desperation.

Barney is pushed farther than the realization of futility, however. In the climax which destroys his hope of the deanship he is driven by self-analysis to confess, "I'm not much of a person." There have been stages in his downward progress. Poor Barney had long since realized that as he grew older and waited a really safe chance to come alive the frail plant within him was withering. Even years before his despairing acknowledgement, he had reached the feeling that he had passed all the decisions of his life that really mattered. Having shaped his life out of respect for phantoms, he discovered that the phantoms vanished but the pattern of his life remained fixed. He asked himself, "What was wrong with him? Why couldn't he ever do a single thing he wanted to do? . . . He was trapped undersea, suffocating. He was buried alive. He felt a claustrophobic hysteria to claw his way free — to *move!*" Barney does move to the extent of pounding his repulsive colleague Creel over the head with one of Creel's own books. It's a beginning, and Barney Stone looks at the future with a sense he's starting again as a freshman, with everything to learn.

To that extent at least *A Lament for Barney Stone* has a note of hope. A feeble note, certainly, but Mr. Kelly might argue that for most men pushed so far there is no rebellion or hope at all.

